BEGIN THE BRILLIANT SERIES OF INDIAN MUTINY STORIES TO-DAY.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY G. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 503. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 20TH, 1898. [ONE PENNY.

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4. D- - - - - - - - - - Y I- - - - - - - - - - E
5. P- - - - - - - - Y I- - - - - - - - - - - E

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(Signed) for the A.B. Cycle Co. Ltd. The Manager.

Please address The PETROLINE CO., 39 GROSVENOR RD., HIGHBURY, LONDON.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY ARTHUR PEARSON

No. 503.] [ONE PENNY.

For the Week ending August 20th, 1898.

IN THE DAYS OF NERO.

"GOOD day to you, signor."

I turned and saw my latest acquaintance, Father Ignatius, whom I had met under such interesting surroundings a few days before, when I had been in the same church.

"I was wondering when you would come and see me again," he remarked, when I had formally saluted him. "You promised to come and go through some of the old MSS. in the library. The invitation for you to do so was a real one."

I explained to him that I had been almost a prisoner owing to a slight attack of fever.

"Then why not have sent for me?" and he smiled.

"Oh, it was not so bad as that," I laughingly rejoined, but I could not for the life of me say whether his remark was in jest or earnest. "I am only too anxious to get at these MSS. of the past. This is my first day out, and as soon as I get into your delightful church, I see something to arrest my attention, and set my imagination to work."

"What is the mystery to-day, signor?"

"This," and I pointed to an inscription cut round the base of a marble pillar:

VALENSSACERDOSET. . . . . R.I.P.

Some name has evidently been erased; one can readily see that time has not been the eraser, but the hand of man. The remainder of the sentence is so distinctly cut into the stone."

"Well, signor, you have at once opened the way for the strangest of stories. For a long time that blank with the remains of letters puzzled me, for one can see, as you say, that the name has been deliberately obliterated which was meant to be commemorated together with that of Valens. I knew that tradition said that Valens was the first priest and founder of this church, and that before becoming a priest he had served with the colours under Suetonius—not unknown, I think in your own country," and he turned to me. "But come, take one more look at the inscription, if you care, and we will go into the sacristy, and you shall hear the story, if you wish."

I expressed my great pleasure, and he left me, returning quickly with a dusty bundle of parchments.

"Would you care to go through the MSS. yourself?" he asked, as he undid the tapes which bound them together.

"I would rather hear the story from you," I answered. The fact is, though I am a fairly good Latin scholar, I was not so sure about the abbreviations of monkish Latin. Another reason was, I knew my clerical friend sufficiently well to know that I should get the pith of the story and all that was worth hearing without the trouble of wading through superfluous matter. He was a critic, too, of no mean order, and would call my attention to doubtful parts.

"This," he said, "is not, of course, the handwriting of Valens, but it is the history of him written by one who had spoken to those who had talked with Valens. There is, I daresay, much that is exaggeration, but I am inclined to believe that the greater part contained here is genuine and authentic," and he turned over the parchments, evidently in search of some particular passage.

"Here is the part which refers to that inscription you noticed," and he read:

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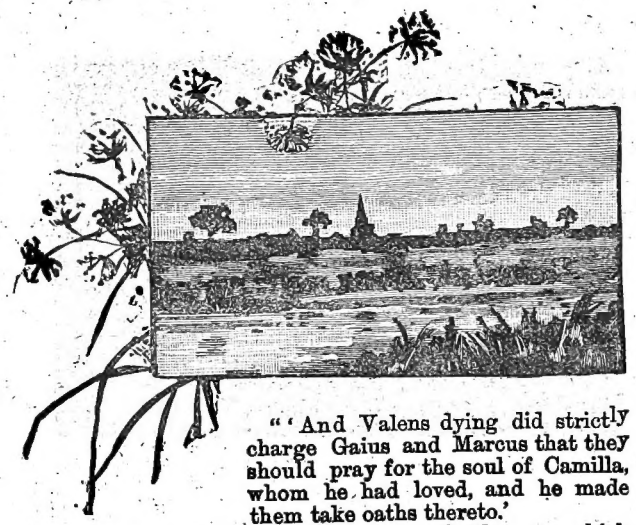

"'And Valens dying did strictly charge Gaius and Marcus that they should pray for the soul of Camilla, whom he had loved, and he made them take oaths thereto.'

"Then there is another passage, further on, which gives the very inscription:

"'So in accordance with the wish of Valens, Amicus, the stone worker, did inscribe VALENS SACERDOS ET CAMILLA R.I.P.'

"Once knowing the name, it is easy to see from the remains that the missing word in the church is Camilla. Did you notice the remains of some of the letters?"

"I was sure the first letter was C," I replied.

"Yes, this leaves no doubt. So I will begin the story. But first will you have some wine? No! Well then, smoke if you wish. I do not use tobacco myself, and therefore can offer you nothing, but I like to see other people enjoy it."

I thanked him, and lighted a cigar. "Now for Valens," I said, as I settled myself comfortably in the chair, and Father Ignatius sat up to the table with the MSS. and some notes of his own before him.

"Valens," he began, "was a young scion of one of the patrician families of the city in the days of the empire. As a child he was the intimate friend and playmate of Camilla, the only daughter of Servius Galba, who was then in charge of the legion of the Rhine provinces."

"Who afterwards became Emperor?" I interrupted.

"The same; but he came to the purple too late to help his daughter," he replied, and went on with the story.

"It was owing to the absence of the father that the mother of Valens received his little daughter into her own house on the death of the child's mother, and, being a widow, I suppose she looked forward to the little girl's company when Valens adopted the profession of a soldier. Not much is recorded of those early days, simply the dry facts. The luxury and elegance of the capital, and the manner of life of its nobles, apparently had no attractions for Valens, who, at a very early age, was placed in one of the military academies, and at the very earliest opportunity he was sent on into Gaul to serve under Suetonius, who, I believe, was related to him.

"Being a lad of good parts, and not spoilt by luxury, as were many of our youth at that period, and possessing a good constitution, the hardships endured in Gaul and Britain, where, for a time, he was with Aulus Plautius, were not long in making him a seasoned soldier. The bravery of his race was all there, and he rapidly won promotion. Soon after the accession of Nero, Valens was chosen by Suetonius as the bearer of the congratulations of the legions serving under him. He also carried a letter of recommendation to the Emperor, in which Suetonius spoke of his young *protégé* as 'one of the men who won the victories for the immortal Nero.'

"Cæsar received the young man graciously, and appointed him to a post in the palace. It may have been, perhaps, this special favour from the Emperor which prompted the young soldier to match himself against Burrhus, who was then Prefect of Rome, and about whom opinions differ.

"During the time of his sojourn with the legions, many changes had taken place. His mother was dead, and Camilla, the playmate of his boyhood, was not only grown up, but engaged to marry the prefect Burrhus. This was the bitter part to young Valens. Knowing of their former friendship, he received a message from the prefect that any attentions on his part to the lady of his choice would meet with the disapproval of her lover. To this, and in fact to all his friends' entreaties, Valens gave no heed.

"He at once sought out Camilla, who was then one of the ladies attached to the court, and in spite of her engagement to the prefect, paid violent court to her. At first he reproached her for consenting to marry such a man as the prefect, who, although a Hercules in strength and as handsome as Apollo, possessed a heart as black and as base as any in Rome. His name was the synonym for the deepest vices and the grossest cruelties.

"Valens made no secret of his intentions. He meant to marry Camilla, and lost no opportunity of pressing his suit. All this was well known to Burrhus, who no doubt would have dispatched the young soldier at once, but the ardent lover was a great favourite at court, and the prefect had to be careful. However, he laid his plans with subtlety and bided his time.

"Meanwhile, the young soldier had so gained the affections of Camilla, that she, far from repelling his advances, encouraged him and asked Burrhus to release her. This he refused to do. Valens was warned that his life was in danger, and urged to leave the capital, but he laughed and calmly went on with his love-making.

"People wondered how it would end, for the prefect was not a man to be trifled with. Three times attempts were made to assassinate Valens, and each time the assassins answered for their audacity by their lives. Burrhus would have fought his rival gladly, but he

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feared the Emperor, and besides this, his plan was a better and safer one.

"At that time the blessed St. Paul was a prisoner in Rome, and this MSS. states that he and Valens often conversed together. It may have been. It is well established that the apostle was allowed considerable liberty, and that he made numerous converts in Cæsar's household.

"However, the love-making of our hero was cut short by his suddenly being arrested as a convert to this new superstition, as it was called. The writing says that he was dragged from the presence of Camilla by Tigellinus and Petronius Arbiter, favourite officers of the Emperor, and intimate friends of Burrhus.

"Camilla appealed to Poppæa, but this celebrated wife of Nero had not the influence then that she had in after years. However bad she may have been, there are many acts of kindness which should be remembered to her credit, and certainly she did her best for the prisoner; but the crafty prefect was too subtle for her.

"After two months of confinement, during which time various influences were at work on each side, the doom of Valens was pronounced. He should fight for his life with the gladiators at the next spectacle to be held in Nero's garden.

"Poppæa promised Camilla that she would be present when the fight took place, and stop the gladiator from killing Valens outright.

"This was one of the privileges possessed by the Empress at the public sports, and it was frequently exercised. Through it many noble lives were spared to years of usefulness.

"But here again the machinations of Burrhus were at work. Whether he had heard or anticipated this last resource of the Empress the record does not say, but certainly he was prepared for it.

"The distracted maiden was mad with grief, and in order to stay her marriage, feigned illness, and threw herself on the protection of Poppæa, who, to her credit, did battle nobly for the poor girl.

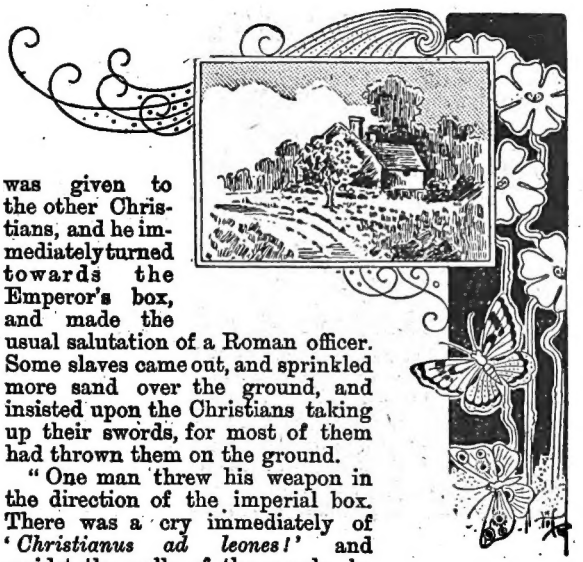
"Through her she was able to have one interview with her lover before the day appointed for his death. She had dispatched messengers to her father, Galba, but they had always been waylaid and slain by those in the pay of the man she hated.

"So the fatal day arrived, and the people assembled in the grounds of the Emperor to witness the sports; Valens was only one among many who were called upon to offer themselves as targets for the hacking of swords of the gladiators. The lust of blood which had prompted the ancestors of these Romans to deeds of valour, now urged them on to deeds of atrocious cruelty. The Christians on these occasions rarely made any effort to defend themselves; it was simply a massacre, and a torrent of blood.

"After some minor shows—a fight between a lion and a tiger, and the exhibition of a Gaul who fought without any weapon with a wolf that had been kept from all food for three days—the arena was cleared, and amidst the plaudits of the mob, and the flourish of trumpets, the condemned Christians were marched in, and placed in position. Among them was Valens.

"It was a cruel sight to see the form once so strong and handsome now so wasted with hunger and suffering, and the narrator dwells at length on his emaciated appearance. For a moment he seemed dazed with the fierce glare of the sun, so the old chronicler tells us; then he seemed to recover.

"A short sword was put into his hands, similar to what



was given to the other Christians, and he immediately turned towards the Emperor's box, and made the usual salutation of a Roman officer. Some slaves came out, and sprinkled more sand over the ground, and insisted upon the Christians taking up their swords, for most of them had thrown them on the ground.

"One man threw his weapon in the direction of the imperial box. There was a cry immediately of '*Christianus ad leones!*' and amidst the yells of the people, he was dragged off, and reserved for a more horrible fate, which I need not mention.

"Then a hush of expectancy fell on the throng as the gladiators marched in. It was noticed immediately that there was a new one among them. Contrary to custom, he wore his helmet closed, so that his eyes and nose were hidden, and he was in full armour. The stranger caused great excitement in the minds of the vulgar, and when he took up his position in front of Valens, whose fate excited most interest, the name of the unknown was eagerly inquired, but no one could, certainly no one did, get any answer. 'A Hercules!' 'A Pollux!' the people shouted. Alongside of Valens, who was tall, the newcomer looked a giant. However, the signal was given. Valens made a desperate effort to break his chains."

"Surely," I ventured, "they did not fight in chains?"

"Yes, they did. Chains were attached to their ankles and their wrists, sufficient to allow the free use of the arms, but still placing them at a great disadvantage, for it was not meant that the Christians should escape or defend themselves with any chance of success, but just sufficient to add interest to what was really a massacre. The manuscript says that when the combat commenced Poppæa hid her face behind her hands, and never looked up till all was over.

"None of the other Christians attempted to defend themselves, and they were ruthlessly hacked to pieces. Much to the surprise of everyone the lover of Camilla resolutely gripped his sword, stood on the defensive, and occasionally gave a thrust; but he was greatly hampered with his chains, though they were not heavy. They are still kept among the relics of this church. I can show them to you afterwards. Remind me when I have finished."

I nodded, rather impatiently, perhaps, for I was interested in the narrative.

"Well," he went on, "the people shouted with delight, pleased at their citizen soldier showing spirit, Christian though he was, and cheers rent the air as the two closed with clash of swords. Everyone felt it was only warding off his death for a moment or two, but again and again

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Valens exhibited exceptional skill in the way he received the savage blows of his mailed antagonist.

"'Well parried, by Bacchus!' they shouted. 'By Pollux, if the Christian were not hampered with those chains, the gladiator's pay would go to his next of kin,' shouted another. It is easily seen from the MSS. how the old Roman spirit of the Christian writer is stirred by these recognitions of courage.

"Still, there was no doubt in the minds of the spectators as to the ultimate victory of the gladiator. 'He but plays with him,' cried one. 'By Bacchus, that was a near one,' as the sword of the stranger flashed for a moment over the head of Valens, and here the chains saved his life, for as he threw up his sword to guard, they acted as a shield to his head.

"For a moment they paused for breath; then the gladiator opened with a quick succession of passes, but gained no advantage. Their blades clashed and rasped.

"Valens was now acting purely on the defensive, and appeared to be fighting with greater coolness since his narrow escape.

"His eyes burnt, and there was a set, determined expression on his face. He seemed to know exactly where each blow would fall, with a prescience which the very desperateness of his position no doubt brought out. You see, he could not lunge at his antagonist, for, with the posture which he was constrained to adopt through his chains, he was not free to balance himself, and a fall was fatal.

"Still the fight went on.

"He skipped about more nimbly than his opponent, whose armour was every moment becoming more of a disadvantage by reason of its weight and the intense heat, and he would have done better without it. Valens, in spite of his privation, was showing less of fatigue. The shouts had ceased now, and the people gazed in silence at the desperate struggle in which the odds were becoming more even; if anything, they were in favour of Valens, but as yet he had not succeeded in drawing blood from his enemy, as far as could be seen. It was hot work. The two combatants lost no breath over words. Neither had spoken since the fight began and they had now been at it fifteen minutes. The gladiator would gladly have had a pause, but as soon as he showed signs of relaxing, Valens plied him so savagely with his quick thrusts, that he had to keep going or succumb.

"The physical condition of Valens was now manifestly superior, and if he could keep it up, the gladiator must go down through exhaustion. This he evidently grasped as well as the spectators, for he now threw all science to the winds, and bore down on Valens with a wild, desperate cry of vengeance.

"Suddenly there was a yell, as the sword of the unknown caught and shivered that of the Christian into a dozen pieces; but, quick as lightning, before his opponent could recover his balance after the sweeping stroke he had made, Valens sprang in upon him, and brought his chains down behind the neck of his antagonist, and the two rolled on the ground together. The gladiator was uppermost, but before he could shorten his sword to give the final stab, the chain was tightened about his neck with desperate, merciless strength, and Valens rose from the deadly embrace, victor.

"The great Emperor leant forward from his box and clapped his hands. Petronius and Tigellinus rushed forward to see to the vanquished man. When they succeeded in removing the head-gear, which had crumpled up like a piece of cardboard with the strength Valens had used upon it, the gladiator was found to be none other than Burrhus, who had managed, through Tigellinus, who was responsible for the organisation of the shows, to take the place of one of the official gladiators, so as to be sure of his vengeance upon the man who had stolen the heart of the beautiful Camilla, and his cunning had over-reached itself.

"He was not popular, and there were few to mourn his death. Nero, who had manifested the keenest delight during the struggle between the two, now loaded Valens with substantial marks of his favour, and certainly he managed to preserve his life through those troublesome times, which is truly wonderful when we remember the edicts against those professing the creed of Christ, and the relentless cruelty of the measures adopted to exterminate them.

"Soon after his desperate fight with Burrhus, he married the playmate of his youth, Camilla, with whom he was permitted to have, for those days, a long period of uninterrupted happiness.

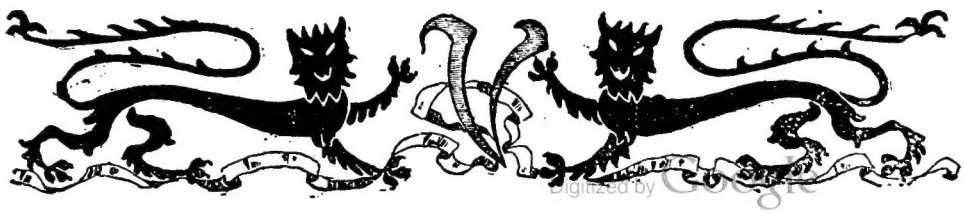
"For many years he was a prefect in your own island of Britain, where his rule was distinguished for its tolerance.

"While there, Camilla died, and he returned to Rome and sought Holy Orders. He is supposed to have been the founder of this church, but there the authority is legendary. Possibly the congregation to which he attached himself took possession of the old home of paganism here, and turned it into a Christian place of worship; but that must, I fancy, have been years after, when happier times had come upon the church. That is one of the original pillars of the older edifice where you noticed the inscription."

"Why was the name of Camilla obliterated?"

"That was done in later times. Probably it was a concession to the strict rules of celibacy when it laid hold upon Christendom. Another point is—there is no absolute proof that Camilla did become a Christian, and it would be repugnant to all ideas of ecclesiastical order to have the pagan inscribed inside a consecrated building. Come into the library and I will show the chains which Valens wore in the memorable fight. There is no reason to doubt their genuineness, as they are mentioned in our records hundreds of years back. It might be worth your while when you go back to see whether you can discover any memorials of him while he resided there."

ATHOL FORBES.



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A BARRISTER'S FEE.

HILLTHAM had been a residence for gentry when London was small. As the metropolis had spread out its octopus arms and had embraced Hilltham, some of the gentry had left; but those who had stayed formed an exclusive set and looked upon the newer comers with contempt.

Every family of the exclusive circle could boast of its descent. They had not all lived in Hilltham since the days of the Tudors and Stuarts, but they had been there for three or four generations. They had managed to keep the old houses—most of them now modernised—in their exclusive possession, except one. But for that blot they would have been happy.

A mere nobody—a Mr. Davis, dealing in iron or something in the city—had bought the best of the old houses, in their very midst! And this man was a parvenu; his father had been a grocer in a small way in a provincial town. The man had absolutely no family traditions, no ancestors. It was terrible.

His son, Robert, was a rising young barrister, a man who would undoubtedly make a mark in the world, and quite a gentleman. But even that did not soften the exclusive set.

Such being the state of things, just imagine the dismay of Mrs. Cone, one of the leaders of the exclusives, when she discovered by chance that Robert Davis and Elsie Cuyler, the descendant of an old Dutch family which had settled in England a couple of centuries ago, had fallen in love with each other! Just how it happened she did not know; probably at some ball in town.

The lovers had just learnt that she had discovered their secret, and were discussing the subject in a palm-screened corner of Mrs. Martin's great ball-room.

"You are quite sure it has got about?" asked Bob for the twentieth time.

"Sure! Mrs. Cone will be over by to-morrow to condole with mamma. Goodness knows why she hasn't been before—she must have had an attack of something—for nothing but illness could keep her away."

"There's nothing for it, then, but to see your father in the morning," said Bob, gloomily.

"There couldn't be a worse time," said Elsie. "He's so put out about that lawsuit of his; there's a hitch somewhere, and yesterday he heard that his lawyer, Mr. Bull, was ill, and couldn't conduct the case; he's in a terrible way about it."

"It's a great pity about Bull," said Bob. "They are afraid it is softening of the brain. It was sad news to me, for he's been a first-rate friend of mine, the dear old man! I have always thought, though, that he took the wrong view as regards that man Hatch. I suppose that is where the hitch you speak of comes in, for there's a hitch somewhere."

"Why, what do you know about it?"

"Well, the truth is, I have been working up the case a little on my own account," said Bob. "It's rather out of the ordinary run, and interested me, and then in a way, it was your case, you see. Bull and I have talked it over several times. I told him I thought he was wrong about Hatch."

"This suit has been father's one thought for years, almost," said Elsie. "I don't know what he'll do now, I'm sure."

"Well, I'll see him to-morrow," said Bob.

"It won't be a bit of use," sighed Elsie. "Oh, Bob, if I could only give you a few dozen of my grandfathers! Goodness knows I don't want them! It does seem to me so ridiculous that I can't marry whom I please, just because two hundred years ago some Cuyler or other founded the family—as they call it! Just as if he had popped up ready-made like a mushroom! Why didn't that Cuyler die young and leave us unfounded?"

Elsie made her absurd little speech with a laugh, but the laugh was almost a sob.

"Can't you see me at fifty, Bob," she said, "prim and faded, and mildly dejected, with a taste for tea, and gossip, and good works; and not even a cat for company, for I hate the sight of them! Can't you see me, dear Bob?"

"You will be my dear wife long before that," said Bob, taking both of Elsie's hands in his. And there was so much quiet determination in his tone that she felt quite comforted.

"I made a vow that I'd win you," went on Bob, "and win you I will, if you'll only be true to me, Elsie."

"Bob," said Elsie, "I can't promise to marry you without their consent, but I'll love you, and I'll wait for you all my life, dear, dear boy."

It is an easy thing to vow vows. Nothing is simpler—an impulse—a breath, and it is done—but oh, the keeping of them!

Bob had sworn, glibly and hopefully enough, to win his true love in spite of all. It was easy to be hopeful while music throbbed and swayed, and his sweetheart was at his side; but later, when the lights were out, and

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the music silent, and his sweetheart away, things assumed a different aspect.

Win her? Yes! In that resolution he never faltered, but a great impassable "How" rose up before him and blocked the way. Night, however, brings counsel, and when Bob had finally turned in, though his head, indeed, was a whirl of chaotic ideas, light beamed over chaos; the creation of his plan had begun.

"Are you training for a walking match, Bob?" asked his father at breakfast. "You kept me awake half the night tramping over my head. Next time you have a troublesome case, my son, do, at least, in mercy to me, take your boots off. Was it a troublesome case, my son, or a bad conscience?"

"Neither," said Bob; "it was a troubled mind this time. The fact is, father, I'm going to be married."

"Well, you're frank at least, and certainly there is something refreshingly sudden about you, Bob! When is it to be? To-morrow?"

"In about twenty-five years' time, father, I should think," said Bob, gloomily.

"I'm glad you give one time to get used to the idea," laughed Mr. Davis. "You quite took my breath away. Who is she, my boy?"

"It is Elsie Cuyler, father," said Bob.

Mr. Davis sprang to his feet.

"Look here, my son, haven't you more pride than to let one of that family play the fool with you? A girl with no more heart—no more truth——"

"Don't, father, please," interrupted Bob. "I can't let even you say a word against her—I love her too well."

"But, Bob, my boy," stammered Mr. Davis, "I tell you I know what they are! They are all alike, root and branch—they are all alike heartless and false; I ought to know—I suffered enough at their hands!"

"Not Elsie, father," interrupted Bob again.

"And prouder than Lucifer."

"But not Elsie," said Bob.

Mr. Davis groaned.

"Now, my dear old father," said Bob, throwing his arm caressingly over his father's shoulder, "nothing you can say will shake my faith in her. She has the pluck to stand out against any Cuyler or anyone else."

"Well," said Mr. Davis with a sigh, "have your own way, Bob. I won't stop you if you think you are right. I don't see how you are going to get her, though."

"I've got a plan in my head," said Bob. "I'm going down to see Bull about it."

The immediate result of Bob's visit to Mr. Bull was two notes. One, addressed to Peter Cuyler, Esquire, was as follows:

DEAR CUYLER,

Come to my house, if you can, some time either to-day or to-morrow; I am forbidden the office. I want to see you about the suit. Robert Davis has just been in, and he struck me as just the man to take it. He has the whole case at his fingers' ends; has been studying it very carefully. I verily believe he has hit on a solution of the Hatch difficulty—cleverest thing I ever heard. I don't think you could get anybody better to carry the case up for you. He is young, of course, but his law is sound, and he is wonderfully keen, and a brilliant speaker. If you think well of it, I will have him meet you here at any time you name, so the sooner something is settled the better.

Yours very truly,
J. BULL.

The other note ran:

MY LITTLE SWEETHEART,

Just a little line to tell you that I shall not see your father this morning, after all. I have a new plan which I will explain to you to-night at the Freemans'. Meantime, suppress Mrs. Cone. Until to-night, my darling, good-bye.

Hastily, but ever faithfully, BOB.

While Elsie was still poring over Bob's note, she was hastily summoned to her mother's room, where she found Mrs. Cuyler in tears, a telegram in her hand.

"Your grandmamma, my dear, your poor, dear grandmamma," sobbed Mrs. Cuyler. "Your Uncle Richard has just telegraphed me to come at once—and I'm afraid it is the end. She is so old; ninety-five her last birthday."

Whereupon Elsie, although her grandmamma had known neither her nor anyone else for ten years, was quite conscience-stricken to find that her keenest feeling was one of rejoicing in that her mother, for a time at least, would be out of reach of Mrs. Cone's tongue.

Immediately all was bustle and confusion in the Cuyler household.

Just as the footman was putting Mrs. Cuyler's travelling-bag in the carriage, Elsie, glancing out of the window, saw Mrs. Cone standing on her doorstep.

"She is coming," thought Elsie, with a sinking at her heart.

"Dear mamma, you will lose your train!" she cried; and straightway she hustled slow, stout Mrs. Cuyler, breathless, but still expostulating, bodily down the stairs.

And just as Mrs. Cone reached the door the carriage rolled rapidly away. And Mrs. Cone simply said good morning to Elsie and walked on.

"What an escape!" gasped Elsie, sinking exhausted into a chair. "In another minute she would have suggested driving down with mamma; I am positive she would. Poor mamma," she added with a little tardy compunction; "I hope she won't have very long to wait at the station!"

Bob threw himself heart and soul into the study of the intricate, puzzling case, which had dropped from Mr. Bull's failing hands into his strong grasp. For Mr. Cuyler had taken Bull's advice and given the case to him.

The case at the time of its first trial had made quite a stir in the legal world. Consequently, could he only lay his finger on the weak spot which he felt existed in the enemy's defences, and succeed in reversing the decision of the court, his name was made. He would then, he felt, be in a position where he could more confidently urge upon Mr. Cuyler the request for his daughter's hand in marriage.

The case was expected to come on in August, and until then it was decided to keep Elsie's parents in ignorance, if possible, of their daughter's revolt against family traditions.

"It isn't exactly like deceiving them, you know," said Elsie somewhat casuistically. "It isn't as if we were going to see each other all the time; as long as we aren't, there certainly can be no use in making everybody unhappy."

"No use at all," said Bob, decidedly. "Of course, I would rather fight it out fair and square. I hate concealment and all that, but when it comes to fighting a lot of ghostly grandfathers, why, I don't see that there is anything for it but to meet them on their own ground, as it were."

Fate had conspired with these young lovers to keep their secret from paternal ears. Mrs. Cuyler, after her mother's death, decided not to return at once, but to have Elsie join her, and to go across immediately to the Riviera for a few months' rest and change. Mrs. Cone therefore, had found no opportunity to enlighten Mrs. Cuyler as to those tell-tale glances and hand-clasps.

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This was to be the last meeting before Elsie left.

They had strolled away together in the sunshine under the soft, feathery elm branches. Everything about them thrilled and throbbed with life and hope and gladness; and their hearts thrilled, too, in unison.

Time passed. The case was reached and heard, and the judges were to give their decision in a fortnight.

Bob had fought his fight well, and had made two or three telling points in his argument.

Little thought those learned men, sitting so solemnly, that romance was masquerading before them in legal array; that a bride as well as a decision was being asked at their hands.

The decision was given. Bob had won!

Old Cuyler's enthusiasm knew no bounds, and he offered to make an addition to the fee.

"I am glad to have been of service to you," said Bob, and after a while he named the price of that service.

"The *fee* I ask is possibly an unusual one," he said. "But you have been good enough to speak of my services as having been of great value to you."

"Eh!" interrupted Mr. Cuyler, sharply.

"Your very kind appreciation, therefore, emboldens me," went on Bob, undisturbed, "as does my knowledge of the importance of this decision to you——"

Mr. Cuyler fidgeted nervously.

"And leads me to hope that you will not think my demand unreasonably great."

"Well, well, out with it! You make as much preamble as though you were asking—asking for a fortune!"

"Mr. Cuyler, I ask as my fee your daughter's hand," said Bob, calmly.

"What, sir!" cried Mr. Cuyler, his red face aflame, "You—you——!"

"I have loved her for years," said Bob.

"You—you nobody! do you dare tell me!" stammered Mr. Cuyler, fairly speechless with indignation.

Bob bent over the peppery old gentleman, holding him down in his chair with one strong, young arm, and looking him full in the eyes.

"Now, Mr. Cuyler, listen to me," he said quietly. "Marry your daughter, I will, either with your consent, or without it, as you please. I will take your consent as my fee. If you refuse it I must, of course, express my demand in pounds, shillings, and pence; and I warn you I shall not insult your daughter by naming a paltry sum as her equivalent.

"You said addition to my fee; but no fee was named!

"I shall then, as I said, marry her without the consent you refuse. I swear I will! You have your choice. Don't answer me now—take till to-morrow to decide; talk it over with Elsie. Possibly you may conclude that to accept my proposition will be the wisest and pleasantest arrangement that you can make, as it certainly is the best from a financial point of view."

"You are a clever young dog! I'll say that for you," fumed Mr. Cuyler.

"Thank you, sir," said Bob pleasantly. "Think over my suggestion, will you? Good-morning. I'll see you to-morrow."

That evening the Cuylers' man-servant actually went up the Davis steps, and pulled the Davis bell handle. Mrs. Cone saw him do it. He left a note, which Bob tore open breathlessly and kissed a dozen times. She saw him through the Davis window. Mrs. Cone was terribly agitated. She hungered and thirsted after the knowledge of what that note contained.

It said:

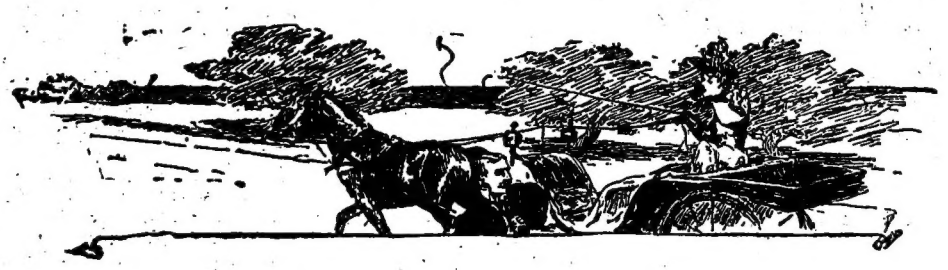
Oh, Bob, dear Bob, it's all right, they have given their consent at last, and I am so happy! Come over at once; they are expecting you. Don't look for an over-cordial welcome, though. I have tried to impress upon them that 'he gives twice who gives quickly,' but it doesn't seem to affect them. There has been a battle royal, but we have won the day, and nothing else matters, and oh, Bob—I love you—love you—love you.

Yours for ever,
Elsie.

And so, when spring again came, there was a wedding over which discussion waxed fast and furious among the exclusives. All the matrons shook their heads, and all the maidens applauded. The presents were superb. Mrs. Cone herself sent a lovely set of dear little devotional books, bound in white vellum, with such a sweet little note.

The wedding itself was like all other weddings, except that perhaps the bride was prettier than some brides are, and that the bridegroom looked more radiantly triumphant and happy.

Gordon Martin.



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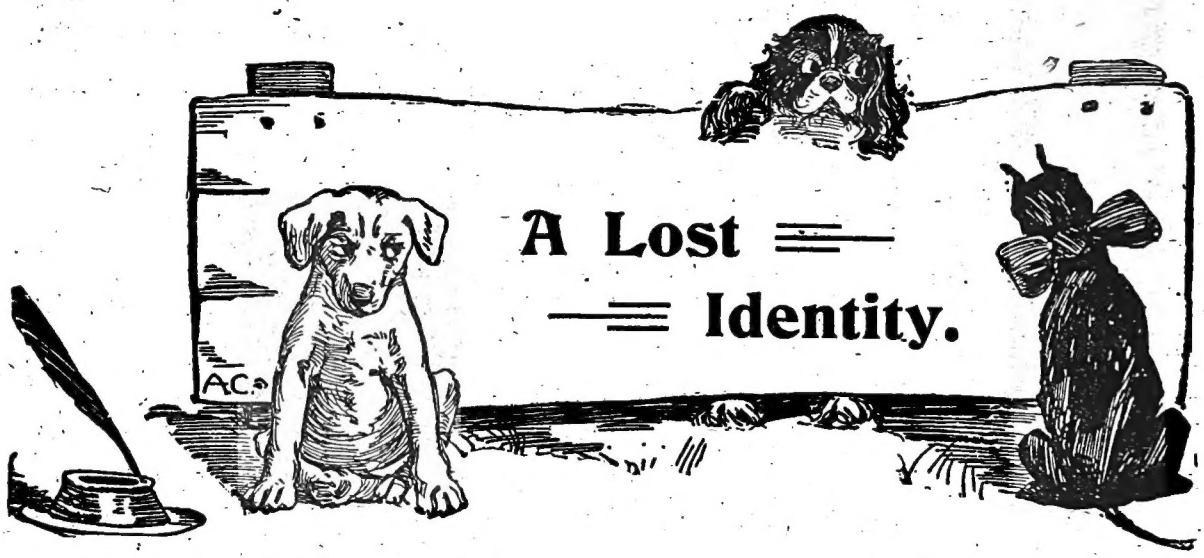

A Lost Identity.

"ADAMS is a good man," said the detective-inspector. "He is persistent, and has ideas of his own. We've about given up the Foster murder, but Adam still sticks to it."

"Where'd you get Adams?" asked the chief of police.

"Volunteered; said he'd just come out of the hospital after a short illness—was a stranger, and had nothing to do; had been reading accounts of the murder and wanted to try for the reward, so I let him go ahead. He had done detective work before. He claims to have two clues—a broken iron seal and a torn piece of coat lining. Here he is now."

A man of about thirty-five entered the room where the two officials were sitting.

"Anything new, Adams?" said the inspector.

"Yes, sir," replied the newcomer, emphatically. "How could we have missed it? Look at that!"

Carefully he took from his pocket a large, white envelope stamped and post-marked. It was partially torn, but this much of the inscription remained:

"Mr. William Dryden, Fairfi——"

The inspector examined it curiously and then said, rather contemptuously:

"Why, Adams, we found a bushel of old envelopes in the dead lawyer's office. You haven't abandoned the seal clue?"

He winked merrily at the chief, but a moment later he bit his lips with vexation at his own stupidity.

"I have abandoned nothing, sir," replied Adams with some heat. "We have accounted for every person we know of who entered the lawyer's office the morning of the murder. We have missed this man Dryden. Examine the post-marks on the other side, that of Fairfield of August 15. Dryden received that envelope on the morning of the murder, came straight to the city and went to Foster's office with it. How else could it have got there? Dryden killed him, and I am going to get Dryden."

The following morning Adams was on the way to the suburb of Fairfield. During the long sleepless hours of the night the name of Dryden had haunted him. He had tried his best to recollect who it was of that name he had once known, but at last he gave it up with a gesture of wearied resignation.

Notwithstanding his loss of sleep he was feverishly awake. He was on the eve of solving the great murder mystery. There was no one to divide with him either the honour or the reward, not even Jackson, an envious detective. What better avocation could he have chosen, and at a time, too, when the future had seemed so hopeless?

It was but a short ride to Fairfield. Adams went at once to the little hotel. As he inquired for a room he looked up at the portly landlord and casually asked:

"Got many people here?"

"A few, sir. The Bradburys, the Gillespies, old Mr. Dundon, and young Mrs. Dryden, poor thing!" replied the host in a way that indicated that these people were known to everybody.

"Why 'poor thing'?" asked Adams, catching at the words.

He tried to conceal his anxiety in the question, and felt he had failed. But the landlord was stupid and loquacious.

"Didn't you hear of it, sir? Her husband left here the middle of August and has never been heard of since. Some thinks he's dead, but his wife don't. He was only here once—I was away at the time. She never leaves her room now, except to go to the post office every day."

Adams was at the post-office the next day at the time when Mrs. Dryden usually went. He kept in the background, for he wished to see without being seen. Already he felt ashamed of himself. The idea of spying upon a broken-hearted woman and laying a trap for the one she loved, was something more than merely distasteful to him.

She came at last—a fair, golden-haired woman. Even at a distance he knew that it was she before he made an inquiry. As she drew near he retired behind a recess in the post-office and watched her with staring eyes. Slowly and with seeming reluctance she left the counter after her futile errand. In her face there was an expression of infinite sadness, yet in her eyes still flickered the light of hope.

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Adams stood there long after she had disappeared—stood there knowing well that his mission was at an end. Never through his efforts would her husband be captured. Short as was the time he had seen her, he knew that he loved her. In his heart he felt there had always been just such an image of a gentle face.

Out of the post-office he drifted aimlessly. A number of people were coming from the railway station, where a train had just arrived. Suddenly his face flushed in anger as he recognised among the number his fellow-detective, Jackson. In a sort of frenzy he rushed at him and grasped him tightly by both arms.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded.

"I came at a request——"

"Go back at once. I am going. There is nothing in it. Foster requested that the letter be returned to him immediately. That is the investigation of the envelope. I have seen Dryden and investigated everything. The man had nothing to do with the murder. Are you going?"

"Yes; but——"

"Then *go*!" screamed Adams, beside himself with impatient rage. "I will join you at the station. A train will be due shortly. Stay there or I'll—strangle you!"

Jackson looked at him in amazement, hesitated a moment, and then turned and walked back to the station. Adams watched him until he saw him enter the building, when he wheeled round and strode rapidly to the hotel. He would see her again, perhaps speak to her.

He entered the room which served as a sitting-room. There was no one there. He then walked out to the desk. The little dog-eared hotel visitors' book caught his eye.

With an exclamation of impatience at not having thought of it before, he was at once engrossed in the book. Page after page he went back over the names with his finger until he stopped as if checked by an electric shock. The little clock on the wall above him ticked off five minutes, but still he stood there, his eyes glued to the page and his finger at a name. Then he hurriedly tore the leaf from the book, and crushed it into his pocket.

A moment later, Jackson entered the hotel and started back when he saw Adams. But in the latter's eyes there was no longer any anger. Instead, he regarded the other detective calmly, but steadfastly. Jackson felt reassured.

"Adams, old man," he began, "what is the matter with you? I'm not here on your job; I'm here on another matter altogether. Show me up, landlord."

The two ascended the stairs. Adams waited awhile and then followed them. At the first landing he found himself in front of a room used by visitors to receive friends more privately. The door stood ajar. It was impossible not to have seen within, and he saw there the woman to whom his heart had gone out, conversing with Jackson.

Not long after that he was in his apartments in the city. He got out the broken seal and the torn piece of coat-lining and placed them upon the table. Then he sent for a doctor.

The doctor found him in a state of excitement, bordering on fever. But he was surprised to learn that he had not been sent for to prescribe for his patient.

"Doctor," said Adams, endeavouring to control himself, "when you treated me for my wound at the hospital, was there any scar left after it had healed?"

"Why, how did you learn it?" the doctor broke out involuntarily. "It is impossible for you to see it yourself without artificial means."

"I understand that. Was there anything peculiar about the scar?"

"There was, Mr. Adams; although I have never mentioned it before. The scar is in the shape of a Maltese cross. But you must not think of it."

The doctor never knew how it happened exactly, but he had hardly disclosed his secret when he found himself ushered out of the house and dismissed.

Adams went back to his room trembling, his forehead damp with perspiration.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, "what made me think of it? What made me examine it?"

Then he snatched up the detached broken arm of the seal and brought it down heavily upon a pad of paper. The impression formed was a Maltese cross.

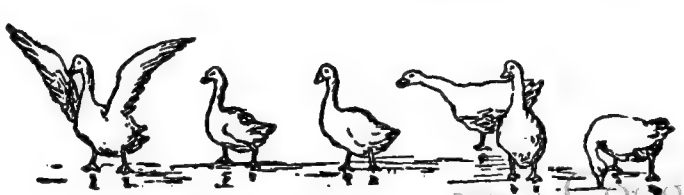
"Here! Here is where it is," cried the distracted man, as his hand clutched the back of his head. He staggered back as if to fall in a faint, when his distended eyes rested for a second on the piece of lining. A newly-born, unnatural energy seized him.

With the piece of lining in his hand he bounded to his wardrobe and tore down his clothes like a madman. He was not long in finding it—a light overcoat, with a part of the lining gone, which the piece matched and fitted. With clenched hands he raised himself to his full height and then fell upon the bed in a heap.

They found him there the next day at noon—Jackson and the lady from Fairfield. When they entered the room his eyes were like those of a man suddenly killed. At the sight of her, life seemed slowly to kindle in them, the eagerness, then struggling recognition, and then the light of a joyful awakening. As the wife threw herself into the arms of her husband, the veil lifted through which his memory had so long and vainly tried to peer. In the fraction of a second it all came back to him; his visit to the lawyer who had tried to ruin him; the murderous pistol in the hands of the other and his successful struggle to secure it; the cruel blow from behind with the broken seal: the renewed attack by the infuriated scoundrel; himself dazed and lapsing into unconsciousness, yet battling for his life, and finally the indistinct vision of a man beneath him, whose throat he grasped with tightly closed hands. Then he vaguely remembered staggering through the street.

Often again the hideous vision came before him, but he told no man or no woman what he saw. For his conscience had acquitted him.

ALFRED COX.



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Untold Tales of the Indian Mutiny.

By H. HUNTER.

III.—THE MYSTERY OF THE RUPEE NOTES.

I TELL the tale as I heard it told.

It was in a pleasant verandah overlooking the goomtee at Lucknow, three-and-twenty years after the incidents narrated had become part of the unwritten history of the great Sepoy Mutiny.

"Yes, India has made many, but it has marred some," observed a retired member of the Bengal Civil Service, who was revisiting the scene of his former labours. "I can recall one, a good soldier, an honest fellow, a thorough gentleman."

We waited for the story, and presently it came.

"Lucknow had fallen, the Kaisarbagh was a wreck, the Court was in flight. Captain Sterling, attached to the 4th Panjabese, covered with dust, grimed with powder, a blood-stained handkerchief bound tightly round his sword-arm, and his tunic cut and hacked to ribbons, wiped his streaming forehead and prepared to follow the orderly.

"He was standing amidst the *débris* in the Palace gardens, endeavouring by voice and presence to curb the savage fury of the looters, who were smashing whatever they were unable to carry away, when a message from the General summoned him to headquarters.

"Sir Colin was not great in strategy, though he laid his plans skilfully at Lucknow; as a commander he may probably have deserved the sobriquet of 'Crawling Camel' which was given him; but he was a good fighting man, and ever prompt to recognise the quality in another. A display of dogged pluck, a fine contempt of danger, coolness under fire, and a grand capacity for hard hitting—these were the things for which the General kept an open eye, and were the shortest roads to favour in Sir Colin's division.

"At the assault on the Shah Nujif, Sterling had led the Panjabese, who supported the Highlanders under McBean; and now, at the attack on the Begam Kothi, the Captain had again shared the honours with the Scotsmen.

"As they raced up to the walls, neck and neck, Sterling had noticed a lot of bamboo poles, such as natives use for hut-building, lying by a heap of stones near a ruined summer-house. He had no ladders, and thinking the poles might come handy, Sterling ordered his fellows to bring them along. It proved a happy thought. The bamboos were laid against the walls, and the men swarmed up like monkeys till, the poles breaking under the strain, the Captain, who was first man up, was left with only a handful of his own Panjabese and half a dozen kilted laddies, to negotiate matters inside with a thousand-and-odd Jack Pandies. And a very good account he gave of them. How many fell to each man's share 'twould be hard to say; but when the rest of the party got into the place, just fifteen minutes after Sterling had mounted the wall, the rebels were lying about thick as flies round a sugar-cask.

"The incident at the storming of the Begam Kothi was not the only brave deed done by Captain Sterling at the taking of the Royal city of Wajid Ali; but it was the only one which happened to be personally witnessed by Sir Colin himself.

"When Franks had got possession of the Kaisarbagh, and the capital of the Kings of Oudh was practically in the hands of the English, the General sent for Captain Sterling and thanked him publicly for the splendid service he had rendered; assuring him of speedy promotion and promising to consider him for the 'Cross.'

* * * * *

"Roy Sterling was the son of a clergyman in a manufacturing town in the north of England—the only boy in a family of five; a hard worker and devoted to his profession.

"By favour of the County member, a commission had been procured for him in the Bengal Army of the Hon. E.I.C.; and he had landed at Calcutta determined to win promotion and earn distinction. The Mutiny had given him a chance. He was coming rapidly to the front, but—Roy loved a woman!

"Mary Eastman was the daughter of an Englishman who had come out to India in the personal suite of a former Governor-General, and having subsequently obtained service in the establishment of one of the native Princes, had decided to remain.

"Until the outbreak of the Mutiny, George Eastman had been on the extensive Civil List of the King of Oudh. The stables and stud of the luxurious monarch, who had as many horses as wives, had been under the control of the 'cute Yorkshireman. The emoluments were large, but the pickings made them larger. Eastman was reported to be nearly as 'warm' as old Johannes, the Portuguese merchant, who traded in everything—State secrets included, and was said to know more of what went on, both inside and outside the walls, than any half dozen others—black faces or white.

"Of the unmarried 'regimentals' who came out to India in the pre-mutiny days, three out of five would have jumped at Mary Eastman and her handsome little 'dot' as a prize well worth the capture.

"The railways, the big ditch at Suez, and fast steamers, have made India to-day quite another country for Europeans from what it was before '57.

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"The number of marriageable white girls in the three Presidencies was then comparatively few, and the chances of a run home, unless for the 'bigwigs,' were too fine to be counted upon. Men went to India in those days to stay. Many never returned till they went back for good. Some made their homes in the country and lived out their lives there.

"The fact that Mary's father was in the pay of the King of Oudh, and probably without any scruple about shaking the Pagoda tree, would not have weighed a melon seed with men, most of whom suffered from chronic impecuniosity, and whose principal object in exiling themselves for an indefinite period was to rake in the rupees and retire.

"Mary herself was a finished little coquette — bright, piquant, attractive. She belonged to a class well-known in India—a class which has wrought a good deal of mischief, and ruined not a few promising careers. Greedy of admiration and fond of exercising the fascinations with which she was liberally endowed, she had no sense of prudence, and was unrestrained by domestic influence and healthy example. She had a soft, seductive manner, eyes which she knew how to use, a wonderfully well-shaped hand, and a voice which could either melt or thrill.

"As became her father's daughter she was a splendid horsewoman, and for all her winsome ways was absolutely fearless in the saddle. Wherever she appeared a crowd of men courted her. Her admirers could be counted by the dozen, her followers by the score.

"But the houses of the upper division of the Covenanted Service were closed against the daughter of the King of Oudh's Englishman, consequently the men who gravitated towards Mary Eastman were mostly of the military class and of the adventurer type.

"The European *entourage* of Wajid Ali Shah was composed chiefly of Portuguese, Italians, and a few crapulous Frenchmen—the offscouring of their respective nations. Above these George Eastman towered, metaphorically, by half a length; but he had touched pitch, and for that and other reasons was not acceptable.

"Lucknow in those days was quite the wickedest city in all India; and the Court, the wickedest quarter in all Lucknow. Mary had lost her mother before she was seventeen, and the atmosphere in which the girl had perforce to live was deadly. That she was no worse than fickle, flighty, and foolish, should stand to her credit.

"Amongst Mary Eastman's many admirers were two who had some reason to suppose themselves particular favourites. They were Captain Sterling and Lieutenant Rodgers. Both were a cut above the best of the bunch which usually gathered round the lady's saddle. Sterling was a poor man with no expectations; Rodgers had a competency and fair prospects. Neither properly came under the description 'adventurers,' and each had a family reputation which rested with him to maintain.

"The men were open rivals for the lady's hand, but it

A very good account he gave of them.

would have been hard to say which had the better chance. The scales were held so evenly between them. Fond of fun, fond of flirting, fond of having her slaves at her feet, Mary played them off against each other, probably without intending any harm, and thinking only how jolly it was.

"Then came the rising at Meerut, the massacre at Delhi, the murders in Lucknow itself; and life suddenly assumed a more serious aspect, while all the joy and gaiety went out.

"After the first relief, under Havelock, Mary Eastman, who had found refuge with a friendly native in a house in the narrow streets at the back of the Kaisarbagh, seemed to have made up her mind that if ever she got out, Roy Sterling and no other should be the man of her choice.

* * * * *

"When Captain Sterling, wearied with the fatigue of four days' fighting, threw himself on his string bed on the night of the 15th March, 1858, to snatch a few hours slumber, it was the happiest moment he was to know in life.

"He had been personally thanked by the Commander-in-Chief, and had learnt that Mary Eastman was safe and well in the heart of the city. From the hand of a native who had inquired for Sterling *sahib*, up and down the camp, he had received a message from Mary herself. She was anxious, she said, to be assured of his safety. She was well, had adopted the dress of a woman of the people, and would come into the English lines as soon as it was safe to venture into the streets.

"Two days later an English lady in native costume came into Grant's camp on the Sitapur road, and inquired for Captain Sterling, giving her name as Mary Eastman. Roy, who was with Outram's division, did not see her.

"On the same day, Sterling received through the hands of the friendly native who had brought him the first message, a packet containing ten 100 rupee notes, together with a few lines signed 'M. E.'

"The writer begged he would accept the notes as a contribution to the commissariat, or hospital funds; 'or make use of them in any way you think fit. If you love me, Roy, you will find a pleasure in expending them for me.'

"Lieutenant Rodgers had looked in on Sterling at breakfast, with a bundle of I. O. U's—innocent looking bits of paper representing fifty pounds—money lost at cards, and pony matches, for sport, and love, and war, went on merrily side by side.

"'If Sterling could make it convenient to pay, the Lieutenant would be eternally obliged.'

"He was being 'pressed' by Captain 'Fourspots'; and Sterling, who had his own reasons for disliking 'Fourspots'—there had been a serious quarrel between the two twelve months before, over a disputed bet, and the Colonel had recommended 'Fourspots' to exchange. The chances of war, however, had brought the men together again. Sterling had promised to let Rodgers have the 'ready' after mess. He hadn't a notion when he made the promise, where the money was to come from, but he knew that 'Fourspots' would willingly sacrifice a few gold mohurs to secure a handful of his I.O.U's.

"When he opened Mary Eastman's letter and saw the ten 100 rupee notes—the rupee was then worth two shillings—Sterling's first feeling was one of relief. He had an uncomfortable notion that 'Fourspots' was seeking to possess himself of the I.O.U.'s held by Rodgers. Any qualms he might have felt about using the notes to discharge his gambling liabilities, vanished when he thought of his 'paper' in the hands of 'Fourspots,' and the use the man would probably make of it. Mary, herself, he felt sure, would think no worse of him. Her standard, perhaps, was not very high; but, having the wherewithal to put himself beyond the reach of his enemy, she would certainly consider him a Quixote to allow any silly scruples of honour to prevent him.

"Half the money would suffice to set him on his legs again, and in future he would take his Major's advice, and give no I. O. U's.

"'Put the cash on the table, my boy, at the beginning, and when the money's done, stop playing.'

"That was the Major's advice to the 'subs.,' and it was common sense.

"When he saw Mary he would tell her what he had done, and had no doubt what her answer would be.

"He took five of the notes, folded them, put them in his waistcoat pocket, and, passing them across the mess table to Rodgers, received back his I.O.U's in exchange.

* * * * *

"Eighteen-fifty-eight was drawing to a close, the back of the Mutiny had been broken, and the country was gradually becoming tranquilised. Captain Sterling, however, had heard no more of his promised 'step,' or of the V.C. for which he was to be recommended.

"Mary Eastman, he had heard, was staying with friends in Calcutta, but a letter which he had addressed to her had failed to bring a reply. The various columns and detachments were continually on the move, and the army post-office arrangements were very imperfect. There was nothing for him to do but—wait. Waiting has always played a large part in affairs Indian.

"At this time ugly rumours were flying round. An inquiry had been ordered by the Chief Commissioner for Oudh into alleged dealing in rupee notes by civil and military officials.

"Numbers of wealthy natives, who had taken no part in the Mutiny, had complained that rupee notes to very large amounts had been obtained from them by Englishmen for sums in cash that were insignificant beyond imagining.

"Notes for 1,000 rupees had been parted with for less than 50 in silver. The English buyers had spread it about that all 'paper' found in the hands of natives be would repudiated.

"Robbery was even alleged on a pretty extensive scale, as the Englishmen would buy 'paper' of any low caste native, who for a few annas would sell notes of the value of 100 rupees.

"Johannes, the Portuguese merchant, was reported to have identified many of the notes, which had passed through his hands more than once. The old dog took pay from both sides indifferently, and lined his pockets thickly. He professed to recognise every one of the notes which has been inclosed to Sterling. He had paid them away to certain traders for goods received, and these men now swore they were stolen from them to sell to English buyers.

"Captain Sterling, when asked to say how the notes came into his possession, declined. His motives were prompted by chivalry, but his refusal laid him open to suspicion. Not for one moment did he dream that Mary herself had obtained the notes by knavish duplicity; but he was not sure about Eastman. It was just the sort of thing that George Eastman might be likely to do. He had no particular reason for shielding

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Eastman, who had returned to Lucknow to look after his property there; neither do I think the personal side—the acceptance of the girl's money—weighed with him a featherweight. But her name was dear to him, and at any risk he would keep it out of a discreditable business.

"Life in India, however, is lived with doors and windows wide open. Privacy is practically unknown. Captain 'Fourspots' and another—besides any number of black faces—had seen a native hand a packet to Captain Sterling on a certain day; the native, indeed, was produced, and told an artless tale about a native woman, which didn't help the Captain. On the evening of that day Sterling, who had acknowledged he was 'short,' had discharged certain debts with rupee paper—being the said notes.

"Captain 'Fourspots' himself had received five, through Lieutenant Rodgers.

"Well, as Roy refused to open his mouth for Mary's sake, there was a strong circumstantial case made out against him.

"The thing dragged on for months, and eventually four men were declared guilty of illegal dealing in rupee notes, one of them being Roy Sterling.

"Many a good man said many a good word for Roy, but from Mary Eastman he heard nothing.

"The authorities were divided over the case of Captain Sterling, but early in '59 orders came from Calcutta, and Sterling was officially informed that the Government of India had no further use for his services, and was instructed to report himself in London by a date mentioned.

"At Bombay, some senseless idiot told him that Captain 'Fourspots' and Mary Eastman were to be married in March.

"I saw him for a few hours before he sailed, and was impressed that I should never see Roy Sterling again.

"One night, when the ship was in the Red Sea, there was a splash heard in the water. Next morning Captain Sterling was missing.

"Poor Roy had 'gone over.'

* * * * *

"The mystery was never properly cleared up. Years after, the native who brought the notes to Sterling, confessed that he had received the packet from 'Fourspots,' who had also instructed him how to act; and later, had coached him and others, for examination before the Commissioner's Court.

"The communication which Sterling received from Mary after the storming of the Kaisarbagh, I think was genuine. The letter which accompanied the notes, I take to have been a forgery.

"'Fourspots' had known the Eastmans for some bit. George Eastman was just the sort of man to attract 'Fourspots'; and likely enough the Captain had sundry specimens of Mary's handwriting in his possession; while forgery is a fine art in India.

"Probably the white rascal had seen the black deliver the first message, and knowing the Indian character had determined to use him as a tool.

"What yarn the beggar pitched to the girl you may guess. She, of course, would put Sterling down as guilty. The 'crime' itself wouldn't shock her, but the consequences of being 'found out' would.

"Rodgers always said that he believed 'Fourspots' was responsible for Sterling's ruin.

"A braver gentleman, a better officer, India never saw, but the end was shame and disgrace, through mistaken loyalty to a woman who was unworthy."

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THE FOUR ARROWS.

A LEGEND OF OLD SYRACUSE.

THE jealous rage of Simetha, the sorceress, is the most powerful poem of antiquity; Simetha, who was betrayed by the Myndian Delphis and could not, by her charms, lure him back to her, had by this been made an implacable enemy of mankind and a blasphemer of love.

She had pursued for ages the impious works of witchcraft, and kept the island entirely under the spell of her sorceries. She was formidable to travellers belated on the shores, and was without mercy to the shepherds who guarded their flocks on the hilltops that were redolent with thyme.

In a cave whose murky depths were relieved only by the dull gleam of mother-of-pearl, whose entrance was almost obscured by the intertwining of briar bushes and the prickly thorn, and was only opened by the magic of a charm, dwelt the sorceress. On all sides of this uncanny cave were hung skeletons of symbolic beasts, and baleful herbs were drying in grinning skulls. There, when the shadows lengthened like the trail of serpents, and the moon was at its full, she brewed her magic poisons.

At her harsh cry, when the shore was dark, all the wicked spirits awoke, and there was a whirring of wings through the air, a crunching on the sands, and a furious crackling among the branches. Then they crept and crouched about the fatal door, awaiting the commands of the sorceress.

Simetha then became like an ancient sybil, her hair bristling like a flight of silver arrows, her face wrinkled and her sunken eyes glowing like embers. Her long teeth knocked together at each hissing breath, and above her shaggy eyebrows played phosphorescent lights.

In her three favourite beasts were imprisoned the evil spirits of the air, the earth and the water. These surrounded her, all impatient for the word of command that should let them loose.

The vulture, with his blood-stained beak, spreads his gigantic wings to sail through the air and cast a blight upon the harvest and a shadow upon joy everywhere.

The wolf bounds forth with open jaws to prey upon the bleating lambs across the plain.

The dolphin, with quivering fins, waits for the signal to plunge into the foaming sea and wreck some boat upon its tranquil course, when he appears upon the surface and sends forth from his nostrils spouts of water in his triumphant joy, beating the waves with his sinuous tail.

And these things happened, for they were transcribed from an old book of undeniable authority, a short time before the beginning of the era of mercy in which we live. The original manuscript having been destroyed at the burning of the library of Alexandria, a literal history cannot be given, only a rude sketch of this strange story.

Simetha was not alone with her evil spirits in her mysterious cave, where the penetrating incense of philters mingled with the rank odours of the mummies of animals and the savage breathing of her three companions, the vulture, the dolphin and the wolf.

Before the despised love for the Myndian Delphis had crazed her, widow as she was of one of the most honourable citizens of Syracuse, she had had two daughters, in whom her power had preserved their youth, at the same time maintaining the equal distance of age between them.

The elder, Thestylis, was the living portrait of her mother when in the full bloom of her once vaunted beauty. Thestylis was tall, and with the wealth of her luxuriant dark hair and the wonderful radiance of her beautiful eyes, was the living image in her marble whiteness of the Venus Victrix, made for the adoration of the helpless.

She had inherited in every way the diabolical nature of her mother, and Simetha had no more bitter and wicked counsellor than this superb creature, who smiled at suffering and danced to the unhappy wail of her victims.

Her hair floating like a fury's, she seemed to spread a darkness round her, and when from the promontory she gazed upon some shipwreck, or looking inland beheld the devastation of a burning field, the wreck of the harvester's toil, her flapping draperies seemed to cast a sinister shadow against the sky.

Unlike her (if anyone was ever like her) was the second daughter, Lilia, whom neither her mother nor her sister could draw into the orbit of their evil doings; as sweet in the virginal flower of her charms as they were inexorable in the fatal evolution of their destiny; made of the brightness discarded from the shadows of their souls, and of all the gentleness shut out from their being. She was a flower of purity in this garden of evil.

More slender than her sister, she was in the purity of her race the incarnation of all that was lovely and feminine, and inspired the sympathy of the good and the wise, for she was like a dream of perfect loveliness, upon whom the poisoned arrows of perversity could make no impression. And in reality she was a thousand times better even than she appeared to be, as her soul was more perfect than its radiant setting.

Even as a child she obstinately persisted in trying to rescue the victims that had fallen under the enchantments of her mother and sister, and often in the night when the sorceress had unchained the fierce wolf, Lilia might be seen, by the light of the stars, hastening toward the distant pasture to warn the shepherd, who, wrapped in his dark mantle, slept peacefully on, unconscious of his danger, with his sheep gathered round him. Or, standing on the edge of a cliff, she would signal to the venturesome sailor who was approaching the rock-bound coast, at the moment that the dolphin disappeared beneath the blue wave. And again she would go toward the mountain which lovers were ascending hand in hand, to put them on their guard before the devouring vulture had spread his great wings to descend like a thunderbolt on their heads.

Thus robbed of their prey, the rages of Simetha and Thestylis knew no bounds. Therefore, to prevent her interference in their machinations, when the hour for their dark deeds arrived, Lilia was imprisoned in the gloomiest corner of the cave, bound hand and foot with

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hempen cords, and in this prison, in her rustic chains, the child slept the sweet sleep of innocence, and wore upon her lips the smile of sweet dreams.

But when the sun was high, she was free; free to follow the flight of the butterfly, and listen to the songs of the birds.

Wandering through the meadows in her garments of white, she often stopped to listen to the rippling of the brook, which was as clear and pure as her own soul.

It was nearing the break of day.

It was the sweet and mysterious hour which frightens away the shadows of the night, and when the petals of the convolvulus tremble before opening.

Simetha and Thestylis had not yet finished their fiendish work; on the contrary, they were making haste to accomplish their dark deeds with feverish fingers, feeling that the hour for enchantments was slipping away.

Lilia was still imprisoned and was lying on her couch, pale and beautiful, with her hair loose and flowing, blending softly with the warm flesh tints of her arms, and contrasting with the harsh colouring of the hempen cords which bound her.

As the sorceress was watching for the first approach of the dawn, a flame of light in the eastern sky made them cry out with rage. But there were no rays from this light, as of the morning sun, and as the light drew nearer they saw it was a boat of gold, which was quickly ploughing the waves and making for the shore.

Simetha and Thestylis howled with a savage joy, like the osprey hovering above its prey. The boat was not empty, nor was it drifting, for a man stood at the helm and directed its course.

Soon they realised that it was from the brow of this mysterious sailor that the light came which illuminated the golden bark.

Suddenly, at a sign from Simetha, the monstrous and impatient dolphin, spurred on by the eager Thestylis, plunged into the blue sea, only a foamy crest indicating its track. Its approach to the boat was shown by a deep ruffling of the waters, which surged and swelled round it, while the vulture, let loose at the same time, darkened the sky with its great wings.

Soon a gigantic wave lifted the fragile craft, and, half opening, clasped it in its immense unfurlings. Then the dolphin appeared upon the surface, to gloat triumphantly over his evil doing.

But the wonderful sailor seemed to fear nothing. Standing at the stern, he drew from an invisible quiver an arrow of flame and pierced the monster between the eyes. With convulsive quiverings, it sank beneath the water, leaving a trail of blood upon the surface. Suddenly the sea became smooth and caressing, and hardly moved the boat which a moment before it had been ready to destroy, and the vulture, who thought that the fiendish work had been accomplished, with a flap of its wings returned to the earth.

The sky at once resumed its usual calm and suddenly were the colours of the rosy dawn mingled with the copper tints of the east.

When, with swelling sail, the boat approached, Simetha and Thestylis were filled with astonishment at the sight of the audacious stranger, who only smiled as he neared the shore.

He was young, with golden hair; his face was without beard, and he had a strange light in his eyes. He was clad in a robe of lily whiteness, the folds of which looked like the unrolling of petals.

Feeling that they were confronted by a superior being endowed like themselves with a mysterious power, Simetha resolved to meet him with stratagem. She composed her deceitful face, and from the lips of Thestylis came a sweet, weird song, like that of a syren, as they approached the stranger quickly to bid him a treacherous welcome.

The morning was already advanced, and the last stars were melting in the cerulean depths like the points of arrows burying themselves in newly-made wounds. Emerald tints blended with the purple of horizon and were lost in an azure mist.

The hour of enchantments was over, and the powers of darkness had passed. They must now wait for the coming of the night to attack the daring one.

And as the stranger alighted from his boat and made it fast to the shore, his tread upon the sand made it scintillate with light like falling stars.

Simetha received him with silent grace, for probably he spoke a language unknown to her, or he thought it useless to speak, as no word had as yet passed his lips, which still wore the same enigmatical smile that seemed to mirror his thoughts.

In the meantime a strange thing had happened. Thestylis, who, for a moment, had left her mother's side, returned transformed. She was not the same Thestylis; with coquetry she had bound her wealth of hair high upon her head and placed thereon a beautiful blood-red rose, and her sombre drapery had been artistically caught up on her shoulder and high on her hip, artfully disclosing the lines of her perfect form and the whiteness of her shoulder, as if the desire to please had for once overcome the desire to harm.

And Simetha admired her for the ruse she had employed to detain the stranger on the island until night, if not by the sentiment of love, at least by the sentiment of admiration.

But Simetha was deceived. Thestylis was sincere. She had obeyed a true feeling, and one new to her. Her soul more than her body was changed. Into her heart, withered by hatred, the smile of the stranger had entered, like a sea troubled and calm at the same time.

She already loved him of the long white robe, and struggled not against the sweet power of love which had thus suddenly been revealed to her. She longed to save him now, and for him would give up her life.

When Simetha withdrew to allow Thestylis to exercise her wiles upon the stranger, she, with an impassioned voice, broken by sobs, told him of the dangers that surrounded him, at the same time imploring him to stay. A woman's sacrifice is never complete.

He listened to her recital without showing any emotion, and it was certainly not from fear that he followed at her bidding, and it was not because he had misunderstood her warning, for only his serene smile and wonderful eyes answered her words.

Following a road which led to the cave, they entered, thus avoiding Simetha, who meditated his destruction, thinking that in this Thestylis was aiding her.

The stranger must be hidden until evening, thought Thestylis, who, taking him by the hand, led him through paths under the rocks known only to herself; but he had seen, through an opening in the granite rock, the sweet form of the sleeping Lilia, in her rude prison, which was closed imperfectly by brushwood from the light of day. Simetha and Thestylis had not awakened her at the accustomed hour, fearing that she might try to save the stranger.

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As soon as Thestylis had brought him to a place of safety, she told him to await her there, while she should go in search of fruit and wine. It was necessary to divert Simetha's attention, so Thestylis departed, turning many times, with a graceful movement of her supple neck, like the stem of a flower, to look back at him.

No sooner had she disappeared, than the stranger retraced his steps until he arrived at the door of the cell where Lilia slept. He tore aside the network of brambles, and, kneeling beside the young girl, he contemplated her in her innocent sleep. The sweet rhythm of her breathing seemed like the music of the oar upon the waters that bears one to the land of dreams.

With tears coursing down his beautiful face, he long and earnestly gazed upon this lovely image; then, with only the breath of a kiss, he awakened her.

A great joy shone in the eyes of Lilia. It was as if she had only changed her chains, to enter into the depths of an unknown gulf, a palace of peace.

Enveloped by a mysterious power, she obeyed the smile of the ever-mute stranger, and when he showed her by a gesture—a gesture full of tenderness and authority—the road that she must take along the shore, and then beyond the sea, she felt her yielding footsteps bearing her onward, and she closed her eyes that she might retain this sweet dream, far sweeter than any before.

She lost consciousness, and when her eyelids opened again her bright eyes looked like an icy brook which had been melted by the spring. She found herself in the fields, he who accompanied her walking by her side and taking her in his arms when obstacle barred the way. Thus the day passed, Lilia not knowing where her footsteps led her.

When the night came they saw a great fire blazing on the shore. It had been built by Simetha and Thestylis, who, in their fury, were trying to burn the boat, the one from rage and disappointment, and the other from a broken-hearted jealousy, and the mountains echoed with their angry clamour.

But the boat was of gold and could at most only become a molten mass, to spread its purple and yellow veins in every direction.

Simetha and Thestylis, certain that the fugitives had not been able to reach the shore, let loose the wolf, who, bounding over the plains with open jaws, caused a panic among the flocks. But this time the flesh of the stupid sheep was not what he wanted, nor did he even turn to look at the frightened shepherds, who, cowering, seemed like swallows flying low before the storm. The prey he sought was the two white figures clinging together at the noise of his approach.

The wolf saw at once his double prey, and with eyes glowing like balls of fire, crouched for the final spring.

Then the stranger quickly sent from his invisible quiver a second arrow of flame, which stretched the monster dead upon the plain. And it seemed as if in the death of the creature a great joy had fallen upon the earth.

The wandering sheep halted to bask in the warm moonlight, which, coming through a rift in the clouds, seemed to cast long white rays which crossed in their path a flight of moths, whose wings glistened as if of powdered silver. The shepherds, leaning upon their staffs, bowed their heads in thanksgiving. Then they all went forward to greet their liberator, to kiss his hands, and the white robe of Lilia, who, like a broken reed, leant upon her companion.

But the stranger, still pointing onward, bade farewell to the shepherds, and, with a signal that they should not follow him, he and Lilia began to ascend the hill.

Beneath them stretched the blue sea in its grandeur. The cool grass refreshed their burning feet with the evening dew, and over the fields came the faint aroma of wild flowers. By the light of the stars they beheld in the distance sleeping Syracuse, and upon the air came the hum of its night sounds, like the murmuring of the ebbing tide.

Lilia clung to her companion in the innocent outburst of her gratitude, and his answering smile brought peace to her soul, and his eyes seemed brighter to her than the brightest stars.

Suddenly a whirring noise was heard overhead, and at the same time the shadow of the vulture fell at their feet in the pale moonlight.

Sent by Simetha and Thestylis, it flew like a rocket through the air, uttering its hoarse cries.

On the horizon were gathered together clouds in nebulous groups, and the moon was slowly descending from its zenith, when again the stranger drew from his invisible quiver a third arrow of flame, which, darting through the air, struck the ill-omened bird. Wounded, it fluttered downward, flapping its wings against the rocks, and then, with a few convulsive quiverings, remained motionless for ever.

And as a silver-lined cloud, loosened from the mass, floated towards them, the stranger, with the dreaming Lilia in his arms, mounted it, as if it were a horse bent to his will.

The cloud, with its burden, floated on and on through space, higher than the mountain-tops and beyond the luminous spaces of the Milky Way.

It was at that hour when the constellations were blazing in their splendours, that the stranger, still clasping his precious burden, craved admittance of the stars that guarded the portals of heaven, to keep out from those blest abodes the evil-doer upon earth. But not one was opened to him; they all pleaded the inflexible command of the Creator, and the eternal law of the universe.

On they went, far beyond the vapoury clouds, and even beyond the stars, until the skies seemed like a glorious and gigantic gem of lapis lazuli, against which their flight would be broken.

Then the archangel Azrael, for it was he, drew from his invisible quiver the fourth and last arrow of flame, and shot it into this inflexible azure, which opened in a golden wound a path through which they entered.

Then throughout all Heaven the shout arose "Azrael! Azrael!" and the triumphant hymn of seraphim and cherubim re-echoed and re-echoed.

But the wound in the sky was never closed again. Another star appeared in the firmament to astonish the wise men of Chaldea.

By the light of this new star the shepherds whom Lilia loved and with whom she had left a part of her beautiful soul, were shown the mystic road to the manger of the new-born Christ.

In a darkened corner of the island, Simetha and Thestylis, checked in their crime, under the new order of things, still send forth their wails at the rising of the moon; and this is why the sailor dreaded that smiling but treacherous sea that washed the shores of Sicily, cradled the idyls of the sweet poet of Syracuse.

Armand Silvestre.

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Begin this Magnificent Serial To-day.

THE FINAL WAR

BY

LOUIS TRACY.

Author of "The Shadow Hand," "An American Emperor," "The Lost Provinces," etc.

SUMMARY.

THE 1898. Irene, daughter of Lord Eskdale, Ambassador at Paris, is engaged to Captain Edward Harington, Lord Eskdale's military *attaché*, and Lieutenant Rodney, of H.M.S. *Magnificent*, to Harington's sister, Ethel.

Lord Eskdale has very good reasons to believe that France and Germany are meditating an immediate invasion of England. He, therefore, dispatches Harington to London to warn the Premier, and Rodney to warn the British admiral established in the Mediterranean.

An attempt to land at Worthing is made by a combined French and German fleet of 36 ironclads, 40 troopships, and 100 smaller boats. The local volunteers hold them in check till the regulars arrive from London.

CHAPTER V.

WHAT THE FLEET DID.

AT eight bells in the second dog watch, the look-out on board the *Magnificent* announced the hour in a stentorian voice, adding with true nautical vigour: "Selsey Light about five knots on the port bow, nor'-east by north. A fine night. All's well," which meant in ordinary English that at eight o'clock p.m. the Channel Squadron and its attendant torpedo-boats were some six miles off the coast in the neighbourhood of Selsey Bill, with a clear sky and smooth sea, and everything in order in the disposition of the fleet.

On board each vessel there was the utmost activity, and, to a landsman, the most hopeless disorder would have seemed to prevail. The ships had been put into fighting-rig hours earlier, but still there remained much to do in the shape of finally testing steam-pumps and hydraulic machinery to see that everything was in working order. Ammunition had to be drawn from the magazines, and placed in proper positions for use, watertight doors in protective bulkheads needed careful examination, appliances for extinguishing fires required overhauling, and, last but not least, the cooks were busy in preparing a solid meal for all hands, as a useful preparation for the labour of the night.

Jack's personal arrangements were soon made. If his occupation kept him below deck he divested himself of blouse, shirt, boots, and socks, belted his trousers tightly round his waist, and chewed a contemplative quid as he set himself to the manifold tasks which still lay between him and supper—for the British tar loves to go into a fight half-naked, as did his progenitor of the days of Trafalgar and the Nile.

Shortly after one bell in the first watch, that is to say, a little after 8.30 p.m., the Admiral signalled half-speed, and and called all captains of ironclads and commanders of smaller vessels on board the flagship. They were soon assembled in the wardroom, as the Admiral's quarters were too small to accommodate so many officers, and were, moreover, being adapted to the requirements of additional hospital space.

Lord Charles Beresford explained that he had brought them together in order that each officer should clearly understand not only his own duties but the general plan of attack, and it would be the duty of commanders individually, through their subordinates, to make the principles of his intentions known to every member of each ship's company.

"I take it, gentlemen," he went on, "that few of us, if any, will survive this affair, as we are hopelessly out-

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numbered. But it is our glorious privilege to do all that lies in our power to injure the enemy before we lose our lives or our ships.

"I have asked myself how we can best serve our country at this juncture, and it appears to me that we should endeavour to destroy the French and German transports and thus lighten the labour of the army in resisting any attempt at invasion. You all know the disposition of the allied fleets as outlined in the last message signalled from Gosport, and I have no doubt that a similar formation has been preserved in anchorage. Some of the enemy's ironclads and a considerable number of their gunboats will have ranged themselves broadside to the beach to shell the town and defending forces, whilst the attention of the remainder will be keenly directed towards the efforts of the troops to effect a landing.

"There is no moon, and if I mistake not, a fresh breeze from the sea and the clouds coming with it, together with the noise and excitement of the bombardment, will render it comparatively easy for us to approach unobserved, as a sharp look-out to the south is hardly to be expected under the conditions. If they expect a naval attack from any quarter it will be from either east or west.

"That being so, I purpose making a detour and striking in from the southward. Battle-ships will form in two divisions, the *Magnificent* leading the starboard and the *Resolution* the port attack. Torpedo-boats will follow in the same formation until the moment of impact with the enemy. It is probable that the enemy's gunboats and torpedo-boats will be present in considerable numbers on the weather-side of the fleet, but it will be the duty of the two divisions of battle-ships to smash right through them, depending upon rams and quick-firing guns only.

"It will be the object of both divisions to intervene between the enemy's battle-ships and his transports, and to screen our torpedo-boats by endeavouring to draw the enemy's fire upon themselves. The torpedo-boats on reaching the fighting-line will incline inwards, the leading pair endeavouring to sink the first two of the enemy's transports. The second pair of torpedo-boats will pass the first, and attack the next transports in the line, and this manœuvre must be repeated by the whole twenty-two boats, each one rigidly directing all efforts towards the single object in view, namely, the destruction of the enemy's land forces and *matériel*.

"When this task has been accomplished, gentlemen, I leave you to your individual devices to do the utmost amount of damage in your power to the enemy's fleet, and when you find your vessels in danger of sinking, you should endeavour to run them ashore to save the lives of the remnants of your ship's companies. The sole alternative to this course is to go down whilst destroying an opponent."

There was silence for a moment when his lordship finished speaking. Then the commander of the gunboat *Speedy* said: "I presume, sir, that I take on as many of the enemy's smaller fry as I can gather round me?"

"No Commander Hardinge, I am sorry to say I cannot meet your views in that way," replied the Admiral with a smile. "It will be your business to send round a launch in an hour's time to collect private letters from the fleet—opportunities will meanwhile be given for writing them so far as is practicable—and you will then observe operations from a safe distance, subsequently making off to Portsmouth or Dover, as you may think fit, and reporting to the Admiralty all that has happened."

The officer thus addressed turned scarlet with indignation "Do I understand you, sir," he said passionately, "that the *Speedy* is to be turned into a post-office, and I and my crew——"

"Commander Hardinge, silence!" said Lord Beresford. "Obey my orders, or, by God, I'll court-martial you in the next world!"

After this explosion the Admiral calmed down a little and explained, in kindlier tones, that the *Speedy* was doing absolutely necessary, if disagreeable service, as the Admiralty must be placed in possession of the facts, there being no certainty of survivors reaching the shore, or of events being correctly observed from that quarter.

"And now, gentlemen," he concluded, addressing the entire gathering, "I have only to say that all external lights must, under every circumstance, be extinguished, the best efforts being made to preserve correct distances. Fresh orders, if indispensable, will be made by trumpet-call from the flagship and repeated down both lines. It remains for me to insist upon the need of every man in the fleet understanding the plan and object of the attack, and to wish you all good-bye and God-speed."

The officers silently saluted and trooped out of the ward-room. Hardinge observed in a sarcastic undertone to Captain Blake of the *Repulse*: "This is a jolly fine arrangement for me, isn't it?"

"Well, you see, old chap," began the other sympathetically, but Hardinge growled:

"Oh, yes, I see well enough. Anyhow, he left me to decide what 'a safe distance' means."

By nine o'clock the squadron was steaming at full speed again, and the course was altered a point or two towards the south.

True to the Admiral's anticipation, a stiffish breeze from the Atlantic put a curl on the waves and promised to bring up a choppy sea next tide. Some light cirrus-clouds spread themselves over the sky, dimming the stars, and lending obscurity to the horizon. Confusion had now given place to perfect order on board each ship in the fleet.

By the Admiral's instructions an extra ration of grog was served out all round, and general permission to smoke was given, as he felt that the exceptional circumstances of the case justified this departure from strict naval custom. He would gladly have sanctioned the use of the ship's bands, too, were it not for the fear of being detected, and as a matter of fact, the French torpedo-catcher, *Belle Etoile*, did unknowingly pass the squadron about half-past ten o'clock at some two miles distance, being then on her way to Brest to announce in grandiloquent terms the occupation of Worthing by the allies, as General de Rosny thought the attack was practically over when the Frenchmen had once gained the pier!

The mere fact that they had been promptly swept off it only served to assure him that in the more determined effort being made whilst he wrote his dispatch they would be successful. Besides, the Paris morning papers must be able to state that perfidious Albion was in the grasp of the combined forces.

On through the night steamed the silent and ghost-like fleet, noiseless, save for the throbbing of the screws, which was hardly discernible in the soughing wind, weirdly indistinct in the unrelieved gloom, seeming like some procession of terrible and gigantic spirits of the deep passing swiftly over the waters to avenge the wrong being done to the Queen of the Seas.

At last the course was abruptly altered by a wheel to the north, and half an hour later the look-out in the foretop of the *Magnificent* reported the flashes of gun-fire and the steadier glare of burning houses right ahead.

The nervous tension throughout the fleet now became almost unendurable.

"Bust me if I can stand this 'ere waiting," said No 1 of the forward barbette 12in. 46-ton gun confidentially to his butty, No 3, and he hummed: "Oh, would I were a bird, that I might fly to thee."

"You'll be there soon enough, Jim," said the other. "I wonder which way we'll go, up, or down, or in pieces?"

"Stop that talking there, or I'll report you after the action," said a warrant officer sternly.

"Who to, Nosey?" said a voice. "To Old Nick?"

At this sally there was a general snigger, in which the lieutenant in charge of the barbette joined.

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Men were thrown into the water by tens of thousands.

Every man in the fleet knew that he was going to practically certain death, but that was of slight import—delay alone was irksome.

The progress of the events on shore was now easily distinguishable, and Lord Beresford's face became brighter than it had been for some time when he found that the enemy had not yet effected a lodgment. The allied fleet was plainly silhouetted against the glaring background of light, and the Admiral, who knew every ship in the French navy by sight, said to the captain of the *Magnificent*: "We are in luck, Drysdale. The farthest vessel in the enemy's starboard line is *La Gloire*, the French flagship. She is just about our fighting weight, and we must endeavour to reach her, if possible."

Astonishing as it may seem, the foremost ships of the British fleet had crashed through the outer fringe of gunboats, sinking four of them outright and crippling several others, before their presence was observed by the enemy's battle-ships. The majority of these were swinging to their cables at the moment of attack, and were consequently in the worst possible position for using their guns, and no sooner had the English ships entered their opponents' lines than they commenced firing with tremendous energy and precision.

In less than two minutes every ship was hotly engaged, and the fight became the fiercest ever known in the history of naval warfare. Never before had such vessels or projectiles been used under such conditions. The noise of the battle was plainly heard at Chichester, Arundel, Horsham, and other towns even more remote from the scene of action.

This surprise was complete. This gave the attacking fleet a very considerable advantage, so they succeeded in cutting off the transports from the ironclads before the latter could make any effort to get under way.

It was only when the British torpedo-boats commenced their career of destruction among the crowded troopships and liners that the allied fleets perceived the frightful predicament in which they were placed, and how their fire was being drawn by the battle-ships to permit complete destruction of the invading force. Throwing every other consideration to the winds, they then endeavoured, by closing in and concentrating their fire, to sink the torpedo boats by sheer weight of metal. But it was too late. Even where they succeeded in their object they as often as not had done quite as fatal damage to one of their own unarmoured vessels by misdirected shots, as a Messageries Maritimes or North German Lloyd steamer sank like a cracked teapot when struck between wind and water by a shell from a 10in. or 12in. gun.

Although the British torpedo boats were literally swept with showers of lead from the troops on board each transport, they grimly persisted in their work of death. Ship after ship was blown up and sunk, the terrible crash of the torpedo attack passing into the roar of a second explosion as the water reached the furnaces. It was a fearful scene of death and disaster. Men were thrown into the water by tens of thousands, only to be engulfed in the maelstrom caused by some sinking ship, to be smothered by the ever-rising waves, or to be crushed into mangled atoms by the swift torpedo-catchers and gunboats darting in from all quarters to the rescue.

Incredible as it may seem, not a transport or cargo-ship was left in the allied fleet. In those few minutes of wholesale holocaust and carnage, 120,000 Frenchmen and Germans, with a fabulous quantity of cannon and munitions of war, had been swept away into the deep waters of the English Channel.

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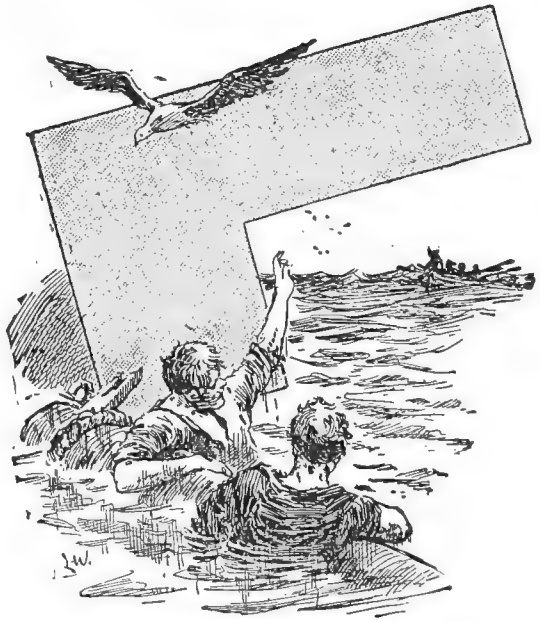
Lord Charles Beresford, perceiving that his apppointed task had been accomplished with a success beyond his wildest hopes, now devoted himself to the comparatively simple task of selling the lives of himself and his men as dearly as might be. Rapidly changing his tactics, he rammed a second-class French cruiser which was crossing his bows, and split her in twain as though she were a rotten stick. This left the path open towards *La Gloire*.

Imitating his example the other ironclads entered into a general action all round. Numbers and weight of metal of course now began to tell, and in fifteen minutes all that was left of the British Fleet was one battle-ship stranded on Worthing beach, and the dispatch vessel *Speedy*, which was hurrying off to Portsmouth with her bows smashed in, with a bullet through the fleshy part of her commander's left forearm, and a broad grin on the face of that worthy officer, who seemed to have completely recovered his good temper.

But the British Fleet had gone down in good company. The eight ships of war were accompanied by seventeen of their enemies, whilst the twenty-two torpedo boats had accounted for all of the allies' transports and thirty-one of their own size. And the shattered remnant of this new Armada made off from this unequal contest, steaming slowly through the night to Brest and Bremerhaven, with rage



Some were picked up clinging to wreckage.

and shame in their hearts, and sore wounds in the bodies of both ships and men.

In a word, the destruction of the British Fleet had entailed the most terrible and crushing disaster that the enemy could have encountered.

Meanwhile, how came the *Speedy* and her commander to stand in such urgent need of repairs?

When Beresford ranged up alongside *La Gloire* he contrived to give that redoubtable battle-ship such a warm salute that she rapidly presented almost as damaged an appearance as did the *Magnificent*, notwithstanding the previous experiences of the latter vessel. An artillery duel at pistol-shot distance between two such monsters must mean the utter annihilation of one or the other in a very few minutes, and, to make sure of the result the German flagship *Fürst Bismarck* proceeded to cross the bows of the *Magnificent*, pouring in her broadside as she did so. As a last expiring effort the *Magnificent*, whose engines were intact although she was perceptibly in a sinking condition, rammed the *Fürst Bismarck* with such hearty goodwill that the lesser German vessel forthwith heeled over and sank. The *Magnificent* quivered and staggered from the effects of the blow, and for a little while her steam-steering gear was thrown out of order.

The incident was taken advantage of by *La Gloire*. She started upon a sixteen points curve which must have brought her steel-shafted nose into the quarter of the British ship, but now the diminutive but irrepressible *Speedy* appeared upon the scene.

When subsequently threatened with a court-martial for disobeying orders, Commander Hardinge explained to Lord Charles Beresford that owing to the smoke and confusion it was impossible for him to learn what had happened unless he ventured right into the midst of the combatants, and at that identical moment, seeing the predicament of the Admiral's ship, he felt bound to interfere, so long as he ran no great risk himself. At which the Admiral laughed contentedly, for he had, on the previous day, recommended Hardinge for the command of a new cruiser fitting out at Milford Haven.

But to resume. Hardinge realised the desperate plight of the *Magnificent*, and was for a second half-mad with his own comparative helplessness. Suddenly an inspiration seized him, and he ran his little vessel at full speed ahead, into the stern of the French ship. By this trick, the object of which was not perceived until it had been accomplished, he smashed both the rudder and the propeller-blades of the ironclad, which drifted away powerless on the tide, to cross the path of the sinking torpedo-boat *Alert*, and to be blown up by the last Whitehead torpedo discharged from its tubes. In fact the tiny assailant was the first to go down.

Lord Beresford saw the whole incident, and was commenting on it to Captain Drysdale when a splinter from a random shell knocked him senseless. The commander of the *Magnificent* then turned the vessel's head to the shore, where he succeeded in beaching her at low water mark. She was drawing five feet more than her wonted depth of water, and must have sunk in another couple of minutes after the time she ran ashore.

A few officers and men from other ships managed to save their lives by swimming to deserted or overturned boats, and some were picked up clinging to wreckage hours afterwards by search parties of fishermen, who proceeded from Worthing to the scene of battle.

The incoming tide cast up a ghastly legacy of the fight in the shape of hundreds, if not thousands, of corpses. It was in this guise, and in no other, that the army corps of France and Germany effected a landing upon British soil.

CHAPTER VI.

The Prince and the People.

England was in a wild ferment of joy on the following day. From all parts of the kingdom came accounts of special thanksgiving services in the churches and chapels, and of hastily convened meetings of Corporations, to give representative assurances to Her Majesty the Queen, and to the Government, of enthusiastic loyalty, and ungrudging support, no matter what might be the trials in store for the nation.

An hour before Mr. Balfour had made his great speech in the House of Commons, the Adjutant-General had issued telegraphic orders for the calling out of the first-class army reserve, and the mobilisation of the Militia and Volunteers. Regimental districts had been hard at work all night in making the necessary preparations, and the consequence was that when every man in the United Kingdom learnt in the daily papers of the dispersal of the allied fleet, he also became aware that his services were needed if he had ever borne arms.

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The result was most gratifying to the authorities.

From every military centre came intelligence of men flocking to headquarters before the official notice demanding their presence had reached them, and in one instance, that of the 29th Regimental District, at Richmond, in Yorkshire, no less than eighty per cent. of the Army Reserve had rejoined the colours before Thursday evening. It may be remarked, in passing, that when the roll was called a few days later, prior to drafting off the troops to their regiments, it was found that in this locality, which was typical of most other places, the magnificent total of ninety-seven per cent, of effectives had been reached.

At Manchester and Birmingham the volunteer battalions set a splendid example to their comrades elsewhere by unanimously deciding to place themselves at the disposal of the Government for service abroad, whilst in Ireland, where there are no volunteers, some amazement was created at Dublin Castle by an offer from the Mill Street district of Cork to supply a complete regiment of *armed* patriots. Scotland rose to a man, and the Welsh miners promised to supply the fleet with enough coal for a year, and then take their places in the ranks.

The Press in London and the provinces not only inspirited the people by magnificent reports of the attack on Worthing and the way in which the British Fleet had maintained its unsullied reputation, but strengthened their courage and resolution by the calm dignity with which the atrocious action of two apparently friendly Powers was discussed.

"Never," said the TIMES, "has England been face to face with such terrible odds; never has she looked with more prophetic serenity to the golden era of renewed peace and prosperity when the battle-clouds shall have passed away. Our most venerable statesman has told us that it is our duty to 'earn anew the gratitude of the world,' and we would fain believe that the unfortunate peoples of France and Germany will not stand aloof from testimony in this regard when the demons of greed and vain glory shall have ceased to blind their eyes to the horror and misery into which they have temporarily plunged a large portion of humanity."

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH meant well in writing a glowing eulogium of the Worthing Volunteers, but in dealing with the disparity of numbers between the allied troops and the Major's stalwart band of riflemen, happened to quote Byron.

> Of the three hundred give but three
> To make a new Thermopylae,

with the inevitable result that Major Perkins was christened Leonidas for the rest of his life. And he rather liked it.

Of course the PALL MALL GAZETTE also broke into rhyme, of broader vein, heading its leading article thus:

> Thrice is he armed who hath his quarrel just,
> But four times he who gets his blow in fust.

But it was reserved for Mr. T. P. O'Connor in *M. A. P.* to give a graphic personal touch to the crisis by thus describing the scene in the House of Commons:

"Men gazed at Mr. Balfour through a mist of horror—a mist of blood I had almost written—and so it seemed to me at that supreme moment in the history of the mother of parliaments. Pallid, dumb, stricken though we were—physically and intellectually palsied with the fearfulness of the announcement—yet were the Irish members keen to notice the rancorous venom with which Mr. Chamberlain plunged, aspen-like, into the debate. When the rough nobility of my friend, Dr. Tanner, showed itself in its shirt sleeves to an astounded House—to be cheered with a frenzy that not even the bitterest partisanship had hitherto evoked—I looked at the Colonial Minister to note how the fierce tumult of the scene affected that sphinx-like and malignant nature. He was to the careless glance outwardly unmoved—frigid, keenly observant, utterly passionless—but to me, versed as I am in every mood, in each hidden emotion of this enemy to the Home Rule cause, there was clear and convincing proof of the tornado that raged within.

The Prince moved forward in front of the brilliant staff.

His eye-glass dangled on his breast, and his orchid had fallen unnoticed to the floor!"

Lord Wolseley, who at 2 a.m. had lain down on a couch in his room at the Horse Guards, rose at 5.30, and by seven o'clock had made all arrangements for a grand review of regulars and volunteers in Hyde Park.

The parade was fixed for two o'clock, and the early editions of the evening papers announced that T.R.H. the Prince and Princess of Wales, the Duke of Connaught, the Duke and Duchess of York, and other members of the Royal Family would attend in State.

The Commander-in-Chief knew exactly what he was about in ordering this seemingly unnecessary pageant. No man in England better realised the tremendous extent of the struggle upon which the country must now embark for self-preservation. It was above all things needful that the spirits of the people should be buoyed up by every resource, and a fine military display, in all the pomp and circumstance of glorious war, was a prompt and fitting sequel to the thrilling news flying hourly across the length and breadth of the land.

Londoners of all ranks crowded into the Park.

Great ladies were there in their carriages, representatives of every class and section of society came to gather inspiration and hopefulness from the spectacle. Not that there were many troops present. A selection rather than an absolute assembly of the forces at the time within hail of the Metropolis had been made by the Commander-in-Chief. The Blues, the 1st and 2nd Life Guards, two battalions of the Coldstream Guards, four squadrons of the Scots Greys, the complete regiments of the 17th Lancers, the 8th Hussars, and the King's Royal Dragoons, two batteries of Horse Artillery, and about eighteen guns of the

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Field Artillery, together with some twelve thousand Infantry, both regulars and volunteers, made up the parade.

The sun, shining down upon this brilliant assemblage of bright-coloured uniforms, with steel cuirass and glittering accoutrements sparkling in its rays, almost robbed the gathering of its fierce significance.

Public enthusiasm, too, knew no limits. As regiment after regiment filed on to the parade ground, cheers were raised for them, and although some of the battalions were better known to the crowd than others, there was no discrimination in the heartiness of the applause accorded to each.

When well-known officers began to arrive there were further manifestations of cordiality from the thousands of onlookers.

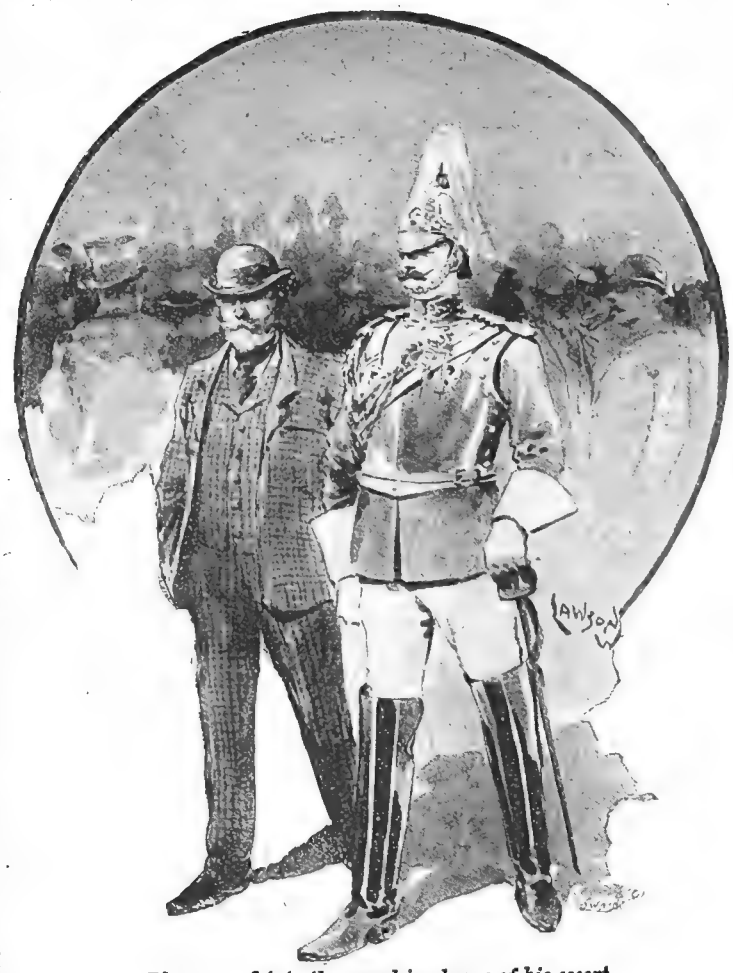
The advent of the Prince and Princess of Wales, accompanied by their daughters, the Duke and Duchess of York, the Duke of Connaught, and a brilliant suite, caused such an outburst of popular enthusiasm that the progress of the Royal party through the Park to the saluting point was purposely made slow.

Even then it seemed as if the people were unable to give complete utterance to the tumultuous feelings of loyalty and national pride which actuated them. It was rapidly noticed that the Princess of Wales and the other Royal and distinguished ladies in the party were simply attired in English, Scotch and Irish products of the loom and mill. Not a single inch of foreign ribbon or lace was visible on their garments, and the people quickly saw that if example could achieve it, Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales, with her ever-ready tact and accustomed good judgment, had given the initiative to a movement on the part of the women of England to wear only home-made fabrics during the progress of the conflict in which England was now plunged.

On reaching the saluting point the carriages were drawn up in semi-circular form, and the Prince of Wales, who wore the uniform of a colonel of the 1st Life Guards, quitted the barouche, where he was seated by the side of the Princess and mounted a handsome charger that was in waiting. The Duke of York, the Duke of Connaught, and such members of the suite in waiting as were military officers, followed this precedent.

The parade was for inspection purposes rather than for the practice of manœuvres. In fact, it would have been impossible for any general to move his troops to any extent over the Park, owing to the dense crowd of citizens of London which on all sides surrounded the battalions now drawn up in line.

Sir Redvers Buller was in command, and it was noticed that after the troops had gone through a few movements in the manual and firing exercise, a communication made to him by the Prince of Wales caused General Buller to so dispose the line that the troops were massed in a hollow square, of which the open side was occupied by the carriages of the Royal party. When the necessary quarter column formation for this change had been effected, the Prince of Wales moved forward in front of the brilliant staff by which he was surrounded, and it was quickly seen that he was about to address the gathering.



Disappeared into the crowd in charge of his escort.

Such an unprecedented incident appealed so strongly to the dramatic unities of the moment, that a marvellous silence fell upon the thousands of people who witnessed it.

In a strong, firm, and evenly-balanced voice, which reached to a very considerable distance, His Royal Highness then spoke as follows:

"Sir Redvers Buller and officers and men of the Garrison of London. In addressing you briefly to-day I depart from established custom in order to utilise this favourable opportunity of conveying to you, and through you to the people of the British Empire all the world over, the sentiments of Her Majesty the Queen at this supremest hour in the history of Britain. Her Majesty charges me to say that she recognises with a delight intensified by life-long conviction, the indomitable faith and loyalty which characterise the English-speaking people at a moment when such qualities are in the most urgent demand.

"The tremendous nature of the struggle into which we are forced by the action of two great countries, but yesterday deemed our friends, is as well known to Her Majesty the Queen as to her subjects. Her Majesty is beyond all things gratified to perceive that in this hour of stress and terrible danger her people are as steadfast to themselves, as true to their convictions, as faithful to the traditions of their forefathers, as Her Majesty has ever believed and has ever known them to be in times of difficulty or peril."

His Royal Highness paused for a moment, and a low

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murmur of applause and of keen appreciation swept through the multitude, which would not cheer so that not a word of the speech might be lost.

With even greater vigour of voice and animation of gesture the Prince of Wales continued:

"The dispositions made by the authorities for the defence of England against invasion, and the protection of our highway through the world—the sea—will be made known to you as rapidly as circumstances may permit. Meanwhile I am enabled by the courtesy of the Commander-in-Chief to acquaint you with the fact that preparations are now being rapidly pushed towards completion for the purpose of landing two strong expeditionary forces on the shores of France and Germany."

At this announcement a tremendous outburst of cheers came from the crowd, and, if the truth must be told, the assembled soldiers were as ready to join in the demonstration as anybody else, whilst their officers were themselves too keenly interested in the momentous statement made by the Prince of Wales to take any definite steps towards checking such an unwonted military solecism as cheering in the ranks.

After an interval of some minutes' duration, order was sufficiently restored to enable the Prince of Wales to proceed.

"It is only," he said, "in consequence of the urgent recommendations of Her Majesty's ministers that I have been restrained from taking my place in some responsible position with one or other of these army corps. For reasons of State, however, it is felt to be imperatively necessary that I should remain in England. No such galling if needful restriction are imposed upon my son, the Duke of York, and my brother, the Duke of Connaught, and both these direct representatives of Her Majesty will fill their fitting positions as English princes at the head of British troops fighting for their beloved country."

Another great wave of emotion passed over the crowd. Men yelled themselves almost into a frenzy of excitement, women wept hysterically, some fainted, and the onlooker, unconscious of the cause of this high nervous tension, might have fancied himself in the Bois de Boulogne rather than staid and orderly Hyde Park.

"And now," said His Royal Highness in conclusion, "there remains for me to say to you all: 'Be of good cheer.' I believe that we shall emerge from this struggle a greater, grander, and more powerful nation than we have gone into it, if that be possible. Whatever of effort, whatever of self-denial may be necessary, will be given by all of us, from Her Majesty the Queen down to her least significant subject. In this matter we are a united and determined people, and I have yet to learn that there is any combination of armed force existing in this world which cannot be swept out of the path of Britain when she is aroused. Again, I wish you all God-speed."

With this His Royal Highness waved his hand to the people and the troops, and there came back to him the appreciative cheers of thousands upon thousands of voices.

The Royal party now made preparations for returning to St. James's, and the Prince again seated himself by the side of the Princess. They proceeded very slowly through the Park, acknowledging cordially the vociferous acclamations from the living lines of people through which their carriage slowly forged its way.

Turning out of the Park at Hyde Park Corner, the escort and vehicles were about to move off at more rapid pace, when suddenly a man sprang from the crowd, dodged a policeman and mounted life-guardsman who endeavoured to intercept him, and jumped on to the step of the carriage in which the Prince and Princess of Wales were seated.

With a look of intense entreaty in his eyes, he said to the Prince, speaking with desperate earnestness: "Will your Royal Highness hear me for a moment?"

Although naturally startled by the incident, the Prince of Wales was quick to prevent two members of his escort from cutting down the daring intruder, as he perceived in a glance that the man had no evil intentions in thus abruptly thrusting himself forward.

"What do you want?" he said to the stranger, who still clung desperately to the side of the carriage.

"I am an inventor, your Highness," was the answer, "and I have discovered a weapon which can be rapidly turned to account, and which I believe will be sufficient in itself to save England even in the face of the odds against her. I am a poor man, and of no consequence. No one will listen to me with sufficient authority to take really practical steps towards rendering my invention of value. I thought that if at the risk of my life I could get speech of your Royal Highness, I might succeed in obtaining your sympathy. I want no reward or self-aggrandisement of any sort. I am above all else an Englishman, and I hope that this fact will be sufficient excuse for my action at this moment."

He uttered these words with such absolute conviction in every tone, and yet with an air of decision and self-reliance that could not fail to be impressive, that the Prince of Wales was strongly disposed to hear him further.

"You know," he said, "that at such a time as this every moment of my life is taken up with important business. Do you feel justified in demanding half an hour from me to listen to you under these considerations?"

"I do, your Royal Highness," was the reply.

The Prince turned to the amazed commander of the bodyguard, who was standing near the carriage ready at a word or a sign to run his sword into the unfortunate inventor should he turn out to be what he looked like, namely, a dangerous lunatic, and said: "Captain Duncombe, kindly take charge of this man and bring him to me personally at Marlborough House at five o'clock. Tell the attendants that it is my express desire you should both see me in person."

The officer saluted, and the inventor, with a look of utmost gratitude and satisfaction on his face, quitted his hold on the carriage and disappeared into the crowd in charge of his escort.

Punctually at the appointed hour Captain Duncombe and his companion, who had meanwhile made himself known as Henry Thompson, an electrical engineer in the employ of the City of London Electric Lighting Corporation, presented themselves at Marlborough House.

The officer had accompanied the man to the latter's lodgings in order to obtain a working model of the device which he wished to exhibit to the Prince of Wales, and before allowing it to be packed up had assured himself that it contained nothing in its essentials harmful to human life, however harmful to that commodity it might prove in subsequent operation.

The Prince of Wales not only listened to Mr. Thompson with the utmost care and appreciation for more than half an hour, but astonished the Commander of the Royal Guard by requesting the loan of a magazine rifle. Some experiments were forthwith made in a coach-house, the doors and windows of which had been closed.

As a result of these strange proceedings, Mr. Thompson was brought back into the Royal study whilst a messenger was dispatched for the Commander-in-Chief. Lord Wolseley arrived five minutes later, and the whole matter, whatever it might be, was gone into again with him.

His lordship appeared to be quite as much impressed with Mr. Thompson's invention as the Prince of Wales himself had been, and the remarkable outcome of this poor and unknown electrician taking the desperate step of forcing himself upon the attention of Royalty in such unpromising manner was that on the following day he found himself at the head of a vast electrical manufactory, with practically *carte blanche* instructions from the War Office and Treasury to turn out as many duplicates of his invention as was possible by working day and night.

The influence of this episode upon the subsequent character of the struggle between England and her enemies became evident later on.

(To be continued.)

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Hide and Seek.

"FIVE years ago to-day," said the Marquise de Kermel, smiling sadly, "my husband and I started upon our wedding journey. Heartily tired of the regulation routes to the Alps, the Riviera, and the blue skies of Venice, laid out by our world for the guidance of newly-married lovers, we turned our steps to the Morbihan, that nearly forgotten corner of weirdly-picturesque Brittany.

"At Vannes one of our relatives suggested to us, among the many other local curiosities, to be sure and visit the old manorial castle of Ker-pen-hir, situated near the Pion-har-ney, not far from those celebrated and mysterious megalithes that they have named the 'Karnac Alignment.'

"A very ancient, half-ruined old castle of crumbling, moss-covered stone, with, nevertheless, in its intricate galleries and ghostly old chambers, remnants of costly tapestries and princely furniture, ravaged and colonised though they were by worms and rats. For concierge or cicerone, as you please to call her, there was an equally ancient old peasant woman, withered and brown as a witch; she had no companion in her caretaking but a tame crow answering to the name of 'Tête Noir.'

"'My good monsieur and madame,' said she, 'this manor was last inhabited by M. Yvon, the last born of Ker-pen-hir. A terrible fighter was he, monsieur, and kept up the war on the enemies of the King long after that which they called the "Pacification of Brittany" took place. Though they hunted and chased him from morning till night, they never caught him, for he had a knack of vanishing whenever it suited him, and they could never find him.

"'One day he disappeared like this, and from that hour till now he has never been seen again. Some think him dead in foreign lands, others here in his own manor, spirited away by the evil one—who helped him, people say. The good curé himself, even, wouldn't come to this place for an empire after the night had fallen.'

"'And you, my good woman,' queried my husband, 'what do you think has become of this singular baron?'

"'*Mon Dieu*, monsieur; how do I know any more than I know where that crow of mine goes for a bed every night? For go he does as soon as dark arrives, to sleep in some place in this old building—the Lord knows where! But, see; here are the keys, take them and go where you please. It will amuse you more than to have me with you, and my old legs carry me badly.'

"Enchanted with the latitude allowed us by this unusually amiable guardian, we received the keys and passed to the inner court, once a handsomely-paved square, but now a wilderness of grass and weeds, in the right-hand corner of which rose the donjon-keep, the staircase leading to its turret being in a dangerous, crumbling state.

"'We'll go up, all the same,' said my husband, 'the view must be superb from that height.'

"But I refused, pointing to the danger of the climb, and my husband went alone, laughing at me for my cowardice, whilst I entered the château and began to wander aimlessly about the great vaulted rooms and echoing corridors.

"Soon I heard my husband coming after me, and the childish notion struck me to punish him a little for his stubbornness and for laughing at me, by giving him a good fright. Laughing with glee, I darted into a corner and squatted down beside an enormous black oak cabinet seemingly pushed there to be out of the way. I would spring upon him as he passed and give him a fine scare!

"I crouched down, I say, and the space being narrow, pressed heavily against the wall. All at once something gave way, something like a panel that yielded under my weight, and before I had time to know what had happened to me I found myself tumbled backward into some sort of pitch-black opening, while the door swung to behind me with a strange whirling grind.

"Startled by the accident, I began to feel about me. Each side of me were walls, glacial, stony walls. Before me, a wooden surface, covered with a ragged padding, through which I felt something like an entanglement of some sort of mechanicism.

"The ramblings of the old concierge flashed into my mind, and the strange disappearance at will of the missing baron. Had he managed to construct unknown and mysterious hiding places in his stronghold at Ker-pen-hir? Such concealments were common in the days of the revolution. Could it be possible that I had fallen headlong into one of those queer secret places?

"The fancy gave me a thrill of romantic pleasure, quickly succeeded by a shudder of deadly terror. Suppose I could not reopen that door? Suppose I remained there to die of fear, cold and hunger?

"Nonsense! I had only to cry out loud enough and they would hear me. But I had lost all further desire to

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frighten my husband! And then I began to call aloud, to call still louder, to scream at the top of my lungs.

"Not a sound responded, and I was conscious myself that my voice made no more impression in that padded cell than if I had been screaming for help in a subterranean dungeon.

"A poisonous, choking odour of mustiness, too, stifled my breathing; the cold froze me to the soul, and I heard under my feet a suspicious scampering.

"Maddened, bewildered, I threw myself upon what I was sure must be the door, clawing, pushing, seeking a spring, a knob, a projection of any kind that would enable me to open it. Nothing! Nothing! The cell of the baron still guarded its secret!

"Nevertheless, my eyes, growing accustomed to the darkness, began to vaguely distinguish that which surrounded me. I moved forward cautiously, and saw before me the first steps of a narrow staircase, built in the thickness of the wall. Perhaps at the bottom I might find some issue! I descended the steps. Ha! I could see better now.

"I was in a sort of vaulted and very high rotunda; what light there was flittering, after a fashion, through a narrow opening in the roof, contrived, possibly, in some out of the way corner of an inner court, and veiled by vines and brambles. Hope revived in me. Bare walls of greyish stones surrounded me; to one side, an old black Breton bed; a couple of chairs; in the centre of the floor, a square table covered with a tattered green serge; on the table, a sword and writing materials; beside it, a huge armchair and—did I see aright?

"Had I lost my senses?—in that chair—a man? Yes, a man whom the high carved chairback had until now hidden from sight; a peasant from the dress he wore, the broad-brimmed, flapping hat, and the embroidered waistcoat.

"Some friend of the concierge's, perhaps, slipping in here for a quiet nap—I was saved—I should soon see daylight. With a scream of joy, I spedto his side.

"'Monsieur! Monsieur!' I cried, and touched his shoulder gently.

"He did not stir. How soundly he slept! I moved round the chair and faced him squarely. A wild shriek escaped me.

"The man was a corpse, a mummy almost; a carcass covered with black parchmentised skin! Two cavities, black and deep, pierced the face, all that was left of what had once been his eyes.

"I shrieked again, and fell against a chair, half swooning with terror. Nevertheless, as often happens in times of supreme crises, I seemed to think with redoubled speed and clearness, to know in a flash, as it were, the desolating truth. I had before me the corpse of Baron Ker-pen-hir, overtaken by death while fleeing from some of his human enemies!

"Some peculiar property in the air in this shut-up dungeon had dried and preserved his remains, as they dry and preserve in a certain Italian convent, in the cells of a subterranean chapel, the bodies of the monks whose souls have passed away.

"Then—then—what would become of me, ignorant of the dungeon's secret, and unable to re-open or re-find the door through which I had fallen? And again I screamed and screamed, till my voice failed me.

"No one came. No one heard me.

"The tones were buried here as they had been in the cell above. Death had caged me, slow, torturing, accompanied by more than the usual hideous train of anguish and fright.

"My mother, my husband, my friends—I should never see them more.

"They would seek me; oh, yes, they would seek me and search and scarch for me, as they had sought for the Baron Ker-pen-hir, but they would never find me any more than they had found him. My inexplicable disappearance would but add another to those sombre legends of which this old Brittany was so full!

"And how I should suffer in that place of horror; before that ironically grinning corpse, tortured by thirst, tormented by memory, before death released me from my agony; without hope!

"Meanwhile, the gloom had increased about me. Vague as the seeing had been from the start, I saw now nothing at all, nothing but the white, gleaming teeth of that horrible mummy-head, concentrating in themselves all the last faint rays of light in that fast blackening chamber.

"Breathless, panting, straining my eyes in the darkness, I fell upon my knees to send up a last plea to heaven.

"Suddenly, as I fell, a cry sounded near me, hoarse, at once mocking and menacing; at the same time the corpse shook its head violently, with a dry, rustling sound. This was too much. My senses left me.

"When I came to myself again the night had passed. A pale, yellowish reflection told me that the sun was shining; that day once more had come. I had not dreamt, however, the horror that had happened to me. I was truly buried alive, by my own childish folly, in the prison and tomb of Baron Ker-pen-hir. That cry, too; that hoarse, raucous cry, which rung in my ears still, I knew now whence it had come.

"I saw now what had set the corpse's head nodding at me the night before. It was 'Tête-Noir,' the concierge's crow, perched on the chair back and pecking and tweaking at the Baron's hat.

"The sight of that bird was a new ray of hope for me. Heaven had truly heard my prayer, for I saw in the coming of that bird to the cell at this time almost a path to assured safety. My plan was formed instantly and I set about executing it.

"In my pocket I had my handkerchief, stamped with my name. Warily approaching him, softly coaxing him meanwhile—a wholly needless strategem, though, as 'Tête-Noir,' despite his evilly sparkling eyes, was the gentlest creature in the world—I caught him in my arms, securely knotted my handkerchief to his leg and launched him gently toward the crevice in the roof, through which he had certainly made his way.

"Cawing loudly, the handkerchief fluttering white behind him, the crow flew away.

"I swooned in earnest this time, only coming back to life to the ringing sound of pickaxes breaking in the roof, and my husband's voice in anguish beseeching me to assure him that I was not dead.

"The rest you divine. 'Tête Noir' had done his errand nobly. Straight as an arrow he had gone for his breakfast; the handkerchief had been seen and removed, but even then another whole day must pass—and this was the second one, remember—before the crow would seek again the place of nightly rest. They watched him, my husband and the peasants he had summoned followed him, saw him enter his lair and I was saved.

"I saw my dear ones again; my friends; God's beautiful sunlight; but I had lived a lifetime of agony in those thirty hours of black entombment, and never more, so long as I live, will I play "hide and seek" in an old Breton manor!"

F. Boubée.

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THE GLADIATOR.

A Tale of the Eastern Empire.

By GEORGE C. WALLIS.

PART THE THIRD.

"Through the Meshes of the Net."

CHAPTER V.

The Sliding Stone.

"We had better seize Time by the forelock," said Rhesus, "and bring our share of the treasure away in the chariot while we have time."

"As you please," replied Proclus, then fell to laughing immoderately, which angered his friend for a moment.

"I see little to make us mirthful," he said. "What has got you?"

"I was thinking of Marcen," said the other, "of how completely, in his suspicious cunning, he has over-reached himself. Had he been content to simply overhear and act upon his knowledge, he would have won. He could have lured you here alone, or waylain me unexpectedly. As it is, he has shown his hand, put us on our guard, and defeated his own designs. But now to work. Since the gold fever is upon us also, let us be quick with our task. You, Zethra," addressing the driver, "will remain with the chariot. If any armed men appear you will leave it and come down to us."

Therewith they entered the lane, and finding the head of the stone stairs easily now so much had fallen in, came soon to the Hall of Waters. The boat, with its rowlocks of graven bronze, still rotted there, floating idly on the slimy flood. Guiding themselves by the flaring light of their pine torches thrown on the fragments of the rusted chain, they pulled along the dismal avenues of the giant pillars until they found the entrance to the tunnel. There they made fast the craft, and entered hastily. But as they overtrod the footstones of the archway, Zethra's voice came to them. It echoed weirdly through the ghostly aisles. They knew that Marcen was once more on their track.

"Back into the boat!" cried Proclus. "We must save my brave man, above all things. And it is scarcely likely they will all face the water."

"And if they do," cried Rhesus, as they pulled back, "you shall not risk your life to save mine again. It shall be as you said that awful night—'Friends always; friends to the end.'"

They reached the foot of the steps as Marcen and six sturdy rogues were halfway down. They got Zethra in and pushed off. Only just in time. Their short sculls had not struck seven sprays of the inky flood behind ere Marcen and five of his men were in the water and swimming after. Lest they should be capsized with coming to close quarters they pulled away with frantic strokes. Springing into the mouth of the tunnel they prepared to dispute the passage.

One they struck back in the death agony as the others clambered up; then, before the onset of the rest, retired gradually towards the great rock door. In the narrowness of the way and the shifting gleam of the torches they had some set-off against the superior number. Going slowly, pace by pace, guarding and parrying every wild stroke carefully, they came to the huge wall of stone that from the slaty greyness of the shadows loomed out black, still, forbidding. They came to a sudden stop. Now one of the foes is down, now Zethra, now another.

With their backs to the wall they eyed the foe warily, each with sword half raised, and in the moment of hesitation that fell upon all at sight of the stone—even upon Marcen, whose fury at his own oversight was now consuming him as a fire—Proclus said to his friend, whispering guardedly:

"Now for the final act in the tragic comedy of this indifferent-merry life of ours, as I said when we stood here before. You to the right, Rhesus; I to the left—but this time let the comedy end differently. Guard me while I press the key in its place, and be ready to dash through. Let them come after if they will."

Rhesus saw his clever plan and stepped a pace forward. Nerved to the utmost tension by all he had suffered from Marcen, he played his sword before the eyes of the enemy like a cataract of falling steel. They gave back a moment, and in that moment there came a grating sound from behind as the huge stone slowly rose.

The friends dashed through the opening it made before it settled back with a sullen jar into its upright place, and the graven characters upon it stood revealed, but the others did not follow. The three gladiators had tasted enough of the two men's valour, although those who had fallen were now up again and Zethra was dead—one, in fact, having dragged him away and thrown him in into the water—and they waited for further assurance. Marcen, for all his ferocity and rising greed, was afraid. The friends threw down their torches and stamped them out, thus shrouding themselves in darkness, leaving the foe in light. In the darkness they took rest and waited.

But the brief gleam that the last flicker had cast into the cavern had flashed on the jewels and the gold of the long-sought treasure piled upon the rocky floor. The fears of Marcen were dispelled. The avarice of the gladiators was aroused. Marcen had not told them of this, merely wishing to use them in getting the key from Proclus. Now they had seen it he had no alternative but to feign to share it with them.

"Make an end of these obstinate fellows," he said, "and we will divide yonder hoard in equal parts. Come, they are only two, and we are four."

No more urging they needed then. With torches waved aloft and short swords pointed forward, they dashed headlong into the darkness. There was a moment's wild struggle, then Proclus and Rhesus won through, rushed out, and turned again. They checked the following charge, and standing one at each side of the passage, at the upper edge of the stone, held their own well. One of the three cut-throats Rhesus stayed with a sweeping upward swing of his blade, and another Proclus settled with a home-thrust delivered in the most approved arena fashion. Only Marcen and the third now remained. These hesitated at daring the passage again; and Marcen, though not facing the two swords that barred the way, foamed at the mouth with rage.

"Why dally there?" cried Rhesus, derisively. "Why let your treasure lie? You have schemed for it long enough, surely! You have played false to all your friends, caused much blood to be shed, and blighted the best years of more than one life, for its sake. By all the gods of old Olympus, and all the saints of the new Heaven, you will surely not confess yourself outwitted at last by a galley slave and a drowned man! Come, there is a way between us!"

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"Yes, come," laughed Proclus, with a cynic sneer, "come! Gather up your precious gold and jewels and trinkets, load up your worthy comrade also, and face us like men! As Rhesus says, there is a way between us, and it leads you clear of this dismal place—if it only leads to the nether world! Waste no more time here than you can help, Marcen. You are somewhat of a judge in matters artistic, and many of these old treasures are splendid works. You know the ancient saying: *'Ars longa, vita brevis'*?"

The fellow with him stood with blanched face and dagger gripped convulsively in his red hand, but Marcen was stung to madness by the taunts of the friends, and lost control. He bade the man keep guard, placed his torch in a cleft of the wall, and ran back to the treasure. He began secreting it about his garments with feverish haste, hurling bitter imprecations at his foes as he worked. He toiled like a driven slave, overturning the piles of glittering wealth and picking out the best. The perspiration poured from him in shining beads. His fingers bled from contact with the rough edges of the uncut jewels.

The two friends stood laughing at him, and presently a fresh thought came to Proclus. He leant upon the wall as though in mortal pain, putting his hands on the rock and resting his face upon them. The gladiator, seizing the chance, sprang forward. But Rhesus understood the cynic's action, and put out his blade, tripping the man up. Before he could rise the same blade stilled him for ever. Into the soul of Rhesus the iron had eaten. Then Proclus lifted his head, slipping something long and bright into the folds of his sash; and with sword poised, glanced upward.

* * * * *

Marcen hears the struggle, hears a peculiar, grinding noise, and looks up also. At what he sees a terror seizes him; a handful of rubies scatters from his grasp. Yet his eye catches the red gleam of one as it rolls on the floor, and his greed cannot let it go. He is no longer a man, he is not even a traitor; he is Avarice incarnate. He springs towards the gem, clutches it with claw-like hand, thrusts it into his girdle, and darts towards the falling stone.

It is more than half-way down now, sinking in a lessening angle with majestic motion. The two men beyond it are blurred to his sight by the thin sheet of dust that falls from its edge in a dry cascade. It comes lower, gaining impetus with its fall, and when he reaches it he has to bend, to creep, to get into the opening.

He casts away the red jewel; a wild oath on his quivering lips; a fearful agony of terror in his bloodshot eyes. He has almost scrambled through when the point of a sword pricks his hand. Its edge shines sharp before his face. He recoils from the glittering thing that crosses the small angle of escape, and a wild shriek rings through the cavern, echoing down the passage like the cry of a lost soul. Rhesus even now would hold back his friend's hand, but Proclus is firm. With cool sneer he watches the mighty mass descend.

It grinds down its guiding grooves with a slight, rocking motion, caused by the impulse of its ponderous bulk. Rhesus averts his eye as a writhing hand is pushed from under it. With a thunderous shock it settles to its place. The vibration of its fall dies away, and all is still. Grim, silent, inanimate, it looms before them, filling the square of the passage completely. Only the clutching hand protrudes.

"It is well," says Proclus, shuddering. "It was awful, but just. Let the treasure lie now, Rhesus. We have enough with the handful of jewels we picked up while we waited in the darkness. I would not raise the stone again for the ransom of an empire."

"Nor I," says Rhesus. "Let us be going."

So they turn back up the tunnel and get into the boat, finding the foot of the steps by the light of the one remaining torch. There Rhesus stoves in the craft, watching it settle down for ever in the flood, and after it Proclus throws the long and slender key of bronze. The black ripples made by its splash break dismally against the giant columns, and the muffled echo of their breaking sighs in weird diminuendo down the dim arcades.

Rhesus utters an exclamation of relief, then together the two friends ascend the narrow stairs.

CHAPTER VI.

Over the Sea to Sicily.

The outlet into the lane was open, and they stepped out of the darkness into the full flush of a perfect dawn. The sun had risen in a cloudless sky, and was bathing the tapering spires and countless roofs of the city in a flood of hot and golden light. Along the narrow streets, however, the shadows were yet deep and cool. The two men, keeping well in the shelter of these, reached the new house of Proclus without observation or pursuit. The gladiator Marcen had left on the steps, they saw not again. Perhaps he had thought better of the business, grown weary of waiting, and gone home. Perhaps he had stolen the chariot, for it was missing!

Their way of escape now seemed clear. If Theodora, through her many spies, had gained no inkling of their plans, it *was* clear. So Proclus bade his friend keep to the house all day, saying that he had work to do that must be hurried, if they were, after all, to leave the city that night.

The hours dragged on wearily for Rhesus. He wandered idly through the statuetted walls of the mansion, listened unheedingly to the sweet songs of the Jewesses, disdained the sensuous allurements of the dancing girls; and as twilight neared, found some relief in the gossip of an old slave. It was such gossip as is usual in such places—such as was every-day talk in that strange city of piety and plunder, wine and wealth—even to the last item, of the sacking and burning of a great villa beyond the wall, near the Charsian Gate.

"It is reported, master," said the old slave, with a peculiarly knowing gleam in the corners of his eyes, "that the pillagers were a band of Sythians, whom—may God condemn them!—have harried our suburbs unmercifully since Nika. But I think otherwise. Be that as it may, they have done their work well and got safely away, taking the fair daughter of the house, who has long been ill-treated, 'tis said, by her harsh foster-parents, with them. The latest rumour has it that the said parents have since been set free. That also I doubt."

Rhesus hoped that the rumour was true, and hearing that the name of the beautiful girl who had been carried off was Annita, gave no more thought to the matter. The old man went out, and after him the dancing girls, and the Jewesses. The dusk deepened to night, and Rhesus felt a strange silence grow upon the house. He went from one room to another, roused to some suspicion. He called for the attendants. The house was empty; no one answered to his call.

He went out into the street, glaring now with the torch-lights of passers-by. He noticed the varying badges of blue and green, and heard the ribald songs of the tipsy gallants whose day began with night. The sky was moonless, but wonderfully starry and clear. The sweeping curve of Andromeda, swung over the changeful Algol, recalled his far-off home to his mind, and the many evenings he had spent in tracing out the constellations on the black background of that mystic space. His uneasiness was lulled a little. He went back into the house and waited; and presently Proclus returned alone.

"I was afraid you would have thought me false, Rhesus," said he, "so long have I been away. My task has been a hard one. The slaves have gone, I see—by my orders. It is well. I have a great surprise for you to-morrow, friend, so stuff your sash with all the coin you can, and let us be going."

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"I am ready," said Rhesus. "Weary of this waiting, too, though I never doubted your fidelity. But what is this surprise you have in store?"

"That you shall know when we are clear of this evil place," said the other. "I have something yet to do here."

He ran down the silent passage to the back of the dwelling, and presently, with a queer smile, returned. Rhesus heard the crackling of dry wood and guessed his errand.

"We must be wily as foxes if we are to get away," said the cynic. "It has come to my knowledge that some hint of my intention has reached the Empress. So I thought it best to create some diversion for the soldiery and the mob!"

They were a street's length away by this, but the cry of "*Fire!*" was already raised, and the crowd ran crushing past them towards the house. Curls of smoke and tongues of flame leapt from the rear of it. Falling sparks, carried by the fresh wind, overtook them.

"Constantinople will have work and gossip enough to-night!" laughed the incendiary. "It will pay them back somewhat for the trouble they gave us that night you and I know so well, Rhesus."

Unnoticed in the tumult and excitement they came easily to the palace garden. Passing the little portal, they entered the aloe grove. Rhesus felt his heart beat high, and a strange diffidence seize him, now he stood on the threshold of love's kingdom at last. Yet when the flutter of Eutasia's robe came down the flower-embroidered path, his dalliance vanished. He sprang out of their concealment and clasped her to him as ruthlessly as he had done that first day—how long ago it seemed!—when he picked her from the sand of the arena and bore her round the course in his chariot.

"Then you are not afraid to leave all for my sake, sweet little 'Tasia?" he asked.

"What think you, Rhesus? I am here, and ready, and impatient to be gone. What would you have more?"

"Nothing, dear," he cried, and led her down the shaded groves to the garden steps, with Proclus coming carefully behind. There, with muffled oars and a silent crew, lay a light galley waiting.

There was a patter of feet and a great commotion in the garden as they stepped on board. Lights flashed between the trees, voices called, weapons gleamed in the clear starshine.

"Cast off!" cried Proclus. The little craft sheered away. He shouted back a mocking derision to the baffled emissaries of the Empress. The rowers gathered rhythm in their strokes, the low shore receded, the lights sank to wavering dots that at last were lost in the gloom, the angry cries were swept away in the night wind. Safety for the fugitives was won at last.

All through the night the galley sped down the dark-shining waters of Propontis and the Hellespont, and though pursued by a warship manned in haste, got clear away and out upon the opening bosom of the Egean.

* * * * *

As the greyness of morning twilight gave place to the red tinge of sunrise over the glittering sea, Proclus drew Rhesus and Eutasia to the stern of the ship's deck, and bade a sailor bring up the lady from below.

She came up the hatchway steps radiant with the freshness of beauty. A blush-red hue was painted on her soft cheeks by the ocean breeze. With the lovelight in her dark eyes, she crossed the deck to Proclus and placed her hand in his.

"This," said the cynic, gravely, "is Annita, whom I took from her home yesterday in a somewhat rough manner. You may have heard of my exploit in the city. She is to be my wife, Rhesus."

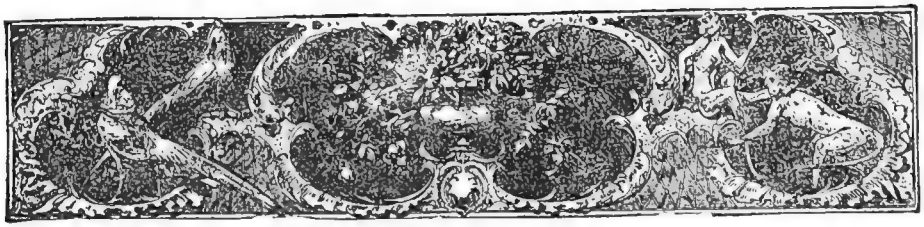
Rhesus said no words beyond a simple greeting, and the two women kissed each other. Leaving them to make friends in their own way, the two men went together to the side and gazed out upon the spreading wash that the ship left behind her in the waters. In that moment of heartfelt joy and peace the ambitions of one and the pessimism of the other were swept away for ever in the merry-whistling gale.

They talked awhile of their adventures and trials, their failures and successes, their loves and their prospects for the peaceful future, arranging to put in at Athens and be married in a sacred shrine of the old faith yet remaining there. Rhesus, as the quiet years of peace to come in the white-walled villa set amid the vineyards and the orange-fields of sunny Sicily lay fair and bright before him, had no regret for the hopes of his youth that were now no more. He had no regret for the life of the gay city blessed by Nature and cursed by man; for the treasure that had cost so much, and was now lost. He had chosen the better part of life, after all, gaining a greater treasure than all the jewels in the world, a greater gift than the applause of men. The words that escaped his lips, breaking the spell of the silence that had fallen between them, were re-echoed lowly by his friend.

Eutasia and Annita took them up in refrain, shattering the spell completely with their merry laughter; and the words that their sweet voices flung out over the sunlit sea were "home" and "rest."

And the swift galley bore them safely to both; for the Fates are kind sometimes.

THE END.



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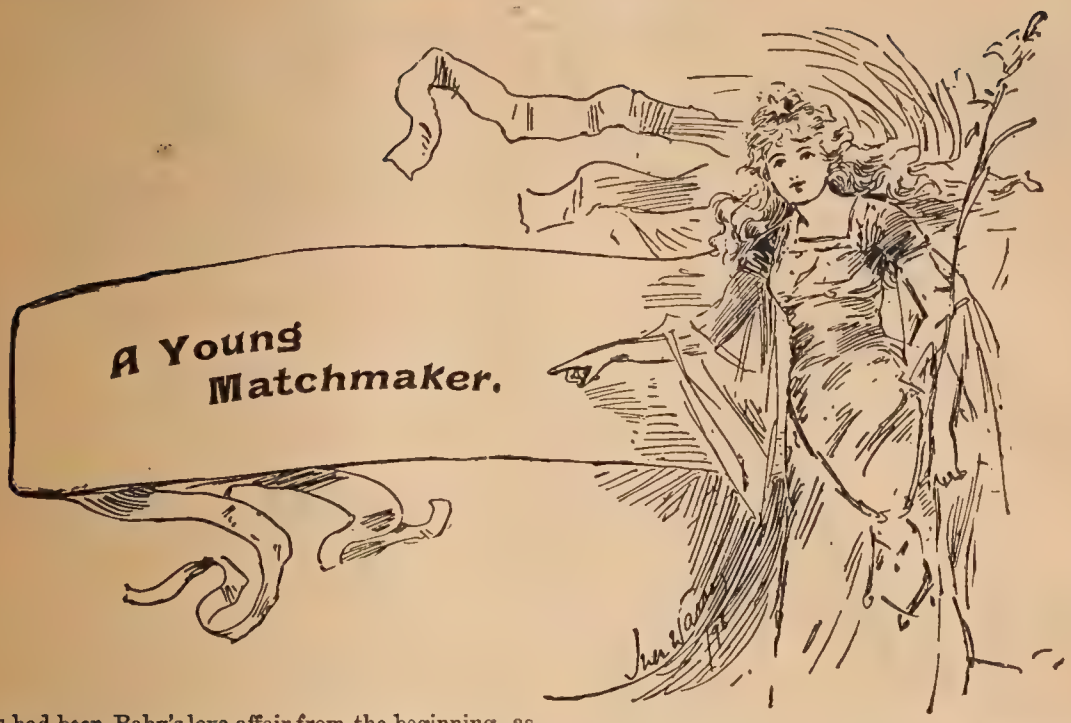

A Young Matchmaker.

It had been Baby's love affair from the beginning, as he had introduced the young people, compassing the matter in this way:

The Lansing family had just moved to Southampton and were busy with the settling of their household goods' The family consisted of The Baby, aged hree years, his father and mother, and Aunt Mary Lanting, all young people, and all, apparently, existing sbut to revolve round the small autocrat of the household.

On this busiest of all days, Baby took it into his curly pate to explore the city of his adoption, and, after various thrilling encounters with huge, hungry-looking dogs, with street urchins, larger and more worldly-wise than himself, and thundering waggons and drays, his courage forsook him, and he collapsed into a sobbing little heap at a street corner.

Just as he had decided that he had not a friend in the world, a young man hurrying past caught sight of the forlorn little one, and, with a mingled feeling of impatience at the interruption, and of pity, stooped and picked him up.

"Hallo, young man! What has happened?"

Baby's plump cheeks were flushed and dusty, with paths down them where the tears had trickled. His lip curled pitifully as he replied:

"I zus wented out, an' now I's losted!"

"Very evident, sir. And what may be your name?"

"Baby," with a sniff.

"Baby what?"

"Ist on'y Baby!" with impatient iteration.

"What's papa's name?"

"Papa, course! An' Mamma's ist Mamma, an' Auntie's 's Auntie, an' 'at's all."

Despairing of identifying his burden, the young man started in search of a policeman, when he encountered a young lady. He had just time to see that she was breathless and pale, and while her pink cotton gown was most becoming, it was hardly appropriate for the street, when she gave an ecstatic cry of recognition and caught Baby in her arms, where he put two plump hands about her neck and patted wildly at the back of her head, to the refrain of "Auntie! mine own Auntie!"

Then, as Miss Lansing turned to acknowledge the family debt to Baby's rescuer, he recovered his dignity and remarked with an eloquent gesture of a fat forefinger:

"Zis ist mine Auntie, what loves me. An' zis ist ve nice man what foun' me when I was losted. I fink I'll call him Uncle, 'cause I never had one 't all, yo know."

And so Baby introduced Frederick Austen and Mary Lansing; and as he had with much trouble to himself, made them known to each other, so he lent them the aid and encouragement of his presence and advice on all important or embarrassing occasions. Sometimes the occasions alluded to were embarrassing chiefly because of Baby's wide, inquisitive blue eyes and searching questions.

One evening, when the young people were discussing Chopin as Miss Lansing played softly, Mr. Austen apparently engrossed in the argument, but really, as he bent over the fair player, marvelling at the changing pink and white in her cheeks and the regular waves of her soft brown hair, an experienced eye would have known at first glance what was immine[illegible]but Baby rushed upon the scene, calling, in his high-pitched [illegible]ble:

"Auntie! Oh, Auntie! I wan' to ask yo somefing!" Then, sure of the attention of his audience, he burst forth eagerly: "W'y—mamma—w'y, las' night mamma said to papa 'at she fought uncle meant somefing sewious, an' I didn't know whedder yo knowed it or not!"

When the critical moment arrived, and the young solicitor skilfully pleaded his case; when his entreaties had broken down the last barrier; when his eager arms

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had opened to receive the slender form; when the world and time itself were, for the moment, blotted out for two people, there came a howl of indignant remonstrance from the staircase in the hall. Baby stumbled down the few remaining steps as fast as his fat legs would allow, tore across the floor and threw himself upon the girl, clutching at her skirts until she stooped to raise him in her arms, where he clung, panting defiantly.

"She's mine auntie, mine own, an' Uncle ner no one else can be a-huggin' of her."

Through the bliss of their early courtship Baby hovered about them with an insistence that sometimes caused Mr. Austen to say something impatient under his breath as he gnawed the ends of his moustache, but, being a wise young man, he concealed the fact that the presence of a wriggling human interrogation-point was not always as welcome as "the flowers that bloom in the spring." He used sometimes to wish that it was a pug instead of a child, "for then," he would soliloquise, "I could persuade Mary to let me take the little wretch by the nape of the neck and put him out of the room."

But Baby stayed on, making himself a prominent factor in their conversation, and on that never-to-be-forgotten day when they quarrelled—about nothing much, to be sure, but still a serious quarrel—he took a hand in the disagreement, sided with his beloved Auntie though plainly stricken to go against the Uncle of his adoption, and placed his chubby little person between the pair.

"Yo shan't look so at mine own Auntie!" he declared with quivering lip. "See how you've made her k'y. Go 'way 'twunst."

Aunt Mary seemed to gain courage from this display of spirit on the part of her protector, for she raised her head and echoed Baby's summary order, adding a few scathing remarks that Baby perhaps thought, but that were impossible to his limited vocabulary.

Three months passed, during which time Baby prattled much of the Uncle who used to love his Auntie, and Aunt Mary grew more slender, and the pink came less often to her cheeks.

And in a solicitor's office a young man fretted and fumed over his law books, or in court glared and thundered at his opponents with a vehemence that caused the older lawyers, whose own love affairs were in the dim and shadowy past, to open their eyes and wonder if Austen were in training for politics.

Coming downstairs one afternoon he encountered at the street door a kilted young man of some four years, with a dilapidated cap set askew on tangled yellow curls and an air of sturdy determination beaming from his blue eyes and not over-clean face.

"Hallo, Uncle!" said he. "I knowed if I come stwaight down stweet I'd fin' you."

"Why, how do you do, Baby?" returned the young man, turning a trifle pale. Then extending his hand: "Won't you shake hands with me?"

"Affe: ..hile," was the business-like response. "But, fyste I want to show you," and he pulled a dilapidated photograph from under his arm. "Zus see how Auntie 's 'poiled zis ole fing, a k'yin' on it. I see her do it, lots o' times, an' I fink you oughter gimme a better one fer her, 'cause you been naughty to her."

For a long minute the young man stood motionless, staring down at the little figure and the soiled photograph of himself. Then with a swoop of his strong arms, he lifted the child as he had done on the first day of their acquaintance.

"I can't say that I'm sorry that the picture has been spoilt in that way, Baby, and I'm perfectly willing to give Auntie another one, but suppose you take Uncle up to see her, and he'll tell her he's sorry for being so naughty to her."

Baby heaved a sigh of relief.

"Well, I fink you better. 'At 's 'e way I allus does when I been naughty, an' it makes me feel good."

Within half an hour all the heartache and loneliness were of the past. Baby stood aside with hands clasped behind him, viewing the pair with speculative eyes. Then their sweet oblivion vanished before his piping voice:

"Uncle, I fink you better stop a huggin' Auntie so hard, an' tell her 'at you're very sorry fer bein' so naughty to her, an' p'omise her 'at you won't make her k'y, never no more!"

Baby steered his love affair successfully thereafter, and at the wedding marched proudly in the procession, and, except that he slapped one of the little flower girls for stepping on the bride's train, behaved with the utmost dignity and decorum.

He still keeps a watchful eye on the pair beneath their new roof-tree, and takes quite the pride of proprietorship in their peace and happiness.

ALBERT ANDREWS.

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IN FRIENDLY CONVERSE.

W. K. L.—No, the Royal Family cannot constitutionally abdicate without the consent of both Houses of Parliament.

G. D. G. writes to point out that Napoleon was once wounded by a musket ball in the left foot at the storming of Ratisbon, when he defeated the Arch-Duke Charles, on April 23rd, 1809.

I. P.—Coats of Arms were originally so called because ladies and gentlemen had their armorial bearings embroidered upon their dresses. A knight was allowed to adopt any symbol he chose, and it soon became the symbol by which he was known.

Fireman.—The difficulty caused by the rapid evaporation of the water contained in the fire buckets of a building or works can easily be avoided by pouring a few drops of oil into the buckets, which will form a preservative coating on the top of the water.

G. G.—The only man in the kingdom to whom the word "Sir," without any qualifying term, can properly be employed as an apostrophe, is the Prince of Wales. In speaking to a baronet—Sir John Jones for example—you must say "Sir John," and never on any account "Sir Jones."

Citizen.—If you wish to have a warm situation for your house, choose a spot on a hill, not in a valley; for although a house situated low down gains a certain amount of shelter from the high winds, it is more than counterbalanced by the presence of damp. Moist situations are always colder than dry ones.

Hiawatha asks for the best way of discovering whether a seed is ripe or not.——There are many ways of determining this. During the process of growth the seed is always soft, when it is ripe it becomes hard. Colour, of course, plays a prominent part in the maturity of seed. A ripe seed is usually brown or black. It will also be found that, as a rule, a ripe seed will sink in water, owing to the density of its particles, while an immature one will float.

Puzzler writes: "Can you assign any reason for the fact that a wetting with fresh water will almost invariably be followed by a severe cold, while a wetting with sea water has no such effect?"————Because the salt in the sea water acts as a double preventive of cold in the following way: It retards evaporation, and the sudden absorption of heat from the body which follows a fresh water wetting is thus avoided. Secondly, the salt causes an extra flow of blood to the skin by its irritating effect upon it.

Storm.—Storm warnings were first issued in Holland in 1860.

Metre.—The expression "hair-breadth," now usually called "hair's breadth," was once a regular measure. It was the width of sixteen hairs laid side by side.

J. N.—The first hippopotamus in the possession of the Zoological Society—in 1851—was a gift to the Society; but it cost £1,000 for transport. The society once paid £2,400 for three giraffes.

R. R. R.—The originator of the famous three "r" alliteration—"reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic"—is said to have been Sir William Curtis, at one time Lord Mayor of London. It occurred in a toast in 1795.

Miner.—A mine on the Dalquharren Estate, Dailly, Scotland, has been burning for fifty years. It has just spent itself. The flames occasionally burst forth from the ground in volcanic fashion. The dykes of rock which intersected it prevented the fire from reaching the other mines.

Alice.—You are quite right; the "spider's web" pattern for dresses and waistcoats is really not at all new. Here is a quotation from a diary written about 160 years ago: "A coat of rich yellow, with the netts of spiders cunningly drawn on the cloth." It was worn by a gentleman at the notorious Ranelagh Gardens.

Contractor asks whether a railway-bridge has ever been fixed in position in one night.————Yes. About eighteen months ago the Great Eastern Railway removed the old bridge over the River Lea, near Tottenham Station, and fixed a new one in its place in nine hours, despite a severe snowstorm. The G.E.R. has done some quick things in that way.

S. I. S.—Sisters of Charity originated with the labours of Vincent de Paul. Wherever he went he was accustomed to urge benevolent women to undertake the relief of the suffering; but he found that these volunteers did not continue the work for long. He resolved to found a society; he did so in 1633. From this society of four members has sprung the great organisation of our days.

B.—The importance of eating a good breakfast is strongly insisted upon by many medical men. One large firm in the North of England is said to have turned out more work with the same number of hands after it altered the time of starting from six to eight, thus enabling the men to have breakfast before they began, instead of working two hours before breakfast. The Portuguese have a saying to the effect that no man can be a good husband who does not eat a good breakfast.

Siller.—A silver coin is usually in currency for twenty-seven years.

Numis.—The "Kreutzer," which may be called the Austrian farthing, and which is being withdrawn from circulation, is one of the oldest of European coins. It has been in existence for more than four centuries. It circulated in North and South Germany at one time, but has been practically limited to Austria for twenty-five years.

Taste.—It is all a matter of custom. The person who cannot do with less than three pieces of sugar in a small cup of tea can, by degrees, accustom his palate to relishing tea without any sugar. Most people would think an egg quite insipid without salt, but one member of this staff declares that salt simply spoils the flavour of the egg. "Salt," he says, "may be necessary if you are forced to eat an egg that has reached the 'political' stage, but otherwise it is a disadvantage."

A. T. has been led by his thirst for knowledge to ask me if America was known to the ancient Greeks.————There is no evidence. A French writer has tried to prove that it was, but his proof is not convincing. He says that Aristotle describes a foreign country where, in the vicinity of marshy ground and sluggish rivers, a booming sound is heard at night. This sound could not be accounted for; but the writer asserts that it must have been made by the American bull-frog; so that America was known to the Greeks.

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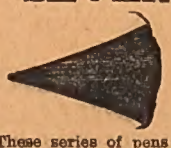

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